

“In the Beginning God...” Genesis 1:1

Propositional Statement: “In the beginning” is a foundational, rich, vital statement of truth that is the true foundation for us to understand God our Creator, the obedience we owe to him, and the reality of creation before the Fall, and the need for redemption.

I.O.W: Obedience is the only true way to real fulfillment, real purpose, and real happiness in God’s created world!

FCF: The Almighty Sovereign, Perfectly Blessed God, revealed Himself by creating all that there is! God gloried in himself - -Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- - and in his perfect will for eternity. Should we not also glory in this Great Creator and Redeemer? God’s eternal will was all that existed before he created; God’s eternal blessedness and glory was the only purpose that existed before he created. We have followed our own way, our own wills rather than God’s revealed will in his Law. We have made ourselves the center of the universe- - the fall has caused us to “glory in ourselves”.

Introduction

- What is the first sentence of the creed that we recite and believe called *the Apostle’s Creed*? It is a foundational statement of truth that we as Christians believe. This foundational statement of belief is the bedrock to any solid faith. It is of the utmost importance that we believe it! We confess: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker (or Creator) of Heaven and Earth.” You believe in a God who existed before anything else in perfect blessedness and satisfaction in himself. You believe in a Sovereign God who created all things out of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days- - and was all very good!
- Because this is the foundation of all Biblical truth, as well as our confession of our faith, let us consider our Sovereign Creator God today and the practical implications for living that this teaches us. How can we begin each day of our lives—not asking what is on *my calendar* today- - what are *my plans*, etc. But by reflecting on your Sovereign Creator God, how can you have a right perspective every day? I mean, how can you ask yourself the question daily: *How can I live obediently today and therefore glorify God?* It is only through obedience to our Sovereign Creator God that we can truly find fulfillment, real purpose, and lasting happiness in God’s created world! This is his world, we are his creatures and we owe him our utmost allegiance and obedience. Our end, goals and purpose must be conformed to his end, goals, and purposes: to glorify God in all we do!
- The Israelites were to be taught the same truth from Genesis! Moses had led the Israelites out of pagan bondage in Egypt (recorded for us in *Exodus*). By God’s grace, the LORD inspired Moses to record the “beginning” or the ‘Genesis’ of all things. Israel was to learn through these Scriptures in chapter one of Genesis that God was not only their Redeemer, but he was also the Sovereign Creator of all things. Genesis taught them that had God condescended ‘in the beginning’ to create a Kingdom so that his creatures would glory in his goodness and Being!

- When we study Genesis, we need to remember that it was written post-Egypt, post-Fall (IOW, it is in the context of history somewhere between Egypt and the Promised Land). It records for us the existence and reality of our Trinitarian God prior to the Fall, but also prior to their existing anything else but God! God, who was full—complete blessedness – satisfied, glorying in his Trinitarian Divine Being- - This Sovereign God “stooped” (condescended) to create and build a Kingdom for his glory and our good! Ultimately, so that we might revel in his blessedness and glory- - partake of the divine nature as the Apostle Peter teaches us!
- IOW: Genesis was written for the people of God - - not as a science textbook- - but as a rich, theological history to teach God’s people: (1) the obedience we owe to God; and (2) the ultimate purpose of our created existence in glorifying God!
- Genesis is primarily concerned about *who* created and *why*- - not as much about *how* and *when*. Science cannot answer the *who* and the *why*, and Genesis is largely silent about the *how* and the *when*. As Reformed Theologian Louis Berkhof says in his *Systematic Theology*: “The doctrine of creation is not set forth in Scripture as a philosophical solution of the problem of the world, but in its ethical and religious significance, as a revelation of the relation of man to his God. It stresses the fact that God is the origin of all things, and that all things belong to Him and are subject to him.”

Outline

I. The God who sovereignly **exists**

A. God completely blessed and satisfied in his Trinitarian existence.

- God is Triune. That is, he reveals himself in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is unity and diversity in the Godhead, but all three are one in essence, and are equal in substance, power, and glory. This means that God is Trinitarian in his Blessed Existence as the Eternal Being! Without being simplistic, you should understand the Trinitarian creation as: the Father created through the Son by the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:15-18 captures this well, speaking of the Son of God and his place in creation (we will discuss the Spirit’s work in creation in the next weeks):

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [that is, the Preeminent One- - not the “first-born” as if he were born in time; if this were so, the Holy Spirit would have inspired Paul to use “first-created”] over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

- Paul also speaks of this truth of God the Father creating *through* the Son in Ephesians 3:

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which ***from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ***, 10

to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord...

God completely blessed and satisfied in his Trinitarian existence for eternity!

- How do we understand a concept like: “God is eternal”? (Quote WCF: Who is God: “God is Spirit, Infinite, *Eternal*, Unchangeable in his Being; Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth.”). How do we as people of time understand a concept like “eternal” at all? How about: *No Time*. Well, you still need time in order to understand the concept. Do you see how frail we are? We are bound in a temporal setting. Genesis begins: “In the beginning God...” yet God had no beginning. Time is related to change - God doesn’t change, he is immutable or unchanging in his Being.

- God does not use watches, he has no clocks to put it in understandable terms. Time passes for us, but “God is- - He is”. He revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3 as “I AM, THAT I AM.” Before the historical moment of “Let there be...” there was only God.

- **Augustine’s theological definition of “time” in eternity (from Augustine’s Masterwork, *City of God*):**
 “For [God] does pass from this to that by transition of thought, but beholds all things with absolute unchangeableness; so that of those things which emerge in time, the future, indeed, are not yet, are the present are now, and the past no longer are; but all these are by [God] comprehended in His stable and eternal presence...nor does His present knowledge differ from that which it ever was or shall be, for those variations of time, past, present, and future, though they alter our knowledge, do not affect His, ‘with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning’ (as James teaches us in chapter 1).”

- Our response to such a Great and Sovereign Creator, must be “wow!”

- Practical point: If these reflections on the God who exists, the God who is Eternal, prior to the creation of the world, if these reflections cause you to revel in his goodness and blessedness, if they overwhelm you with his power and infinite magnitude- - allow this to inform your apologetics! When witnessing to others about the truth of creation, you indeed do want *to be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within in you with gentleness and respect*, but this is preceded by saying “set apart in your hearts Christ is Lord.” We ought to as well, focus our friends’ to whom we are witnessing, to Our Sovereign Creator God *first!* Then explain the reasonableness of creation. You see, if you convince someone of the soundness, or the reasonableness of creation, yet fail to turn their worship to the Sovereign Creator, it is possible that they be a creationist, but a creationist who is going to hell! Use the advice of both Augustine and Anselm. Teach our unbelieving friends to: *Believe in order to Understand* (God, and themselves); not *Understand in order to believe!*

Who is like our Sovereign Creator?

- Who is like our Sovereign Creator God? The great Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck describes God thus: “[God is] Pure Actuality, an infinite fullness of life, blessed in himself.” God is indeed the Eternal One. In him there is neither past, present, or future, neither becoming or change. All that he is, is eternal: his thought, his will, his decree!
 - The Psalmist praises the Lord in this Divine Uniqueness:

Ps. 71:19 Also Your righteousness, O God, *is* very high, You who have done great things; O God, **who *is* like** You?

Ps. 113:1 Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD! 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore! 3 From the rising of the sun to its going down The LORD’s name *is* to be praised. 4 The LORD *is* high above all nations, His glory above the heavens.

5 **Who *is* like** the LORD our God, Who dwells on high, 6 Who humbles Himself to behold *The things that are* in the heavens and in the earth?

- So why do we make ourselves the “center of the universe”? Why do we follow *our* wills and live for *our* purposes? Have you ever considered how individualistic we are as a people at the beginning of the 21st century! Every truly does what is right in his own eyes! Instead, we should start each day of our lives reminding ourselves that we are creatures- -God is the Creator! This should prompt us to think his thoughts after him- - to meditate on his word. We must place him first in our lives as we live obediently *for him* and not for ourselves! If you want to truly honor your Creator, you must seek to glorify him in all that you do!
- Evaluate yourself: (1) *How much time do you spend in meditating on Scripture and prayer each day?* (2) *How often do you just allow yourself to meditate on God: his perfections and attributes?* (3) Here is one thing I recently did - -I re-read an old Christian classic: Augustine’s *Confessions*; Jonathan Edwards’ *Dissertation on the End for Which God Created the World*; Calvin’s *First Book of the Institutes* (“On the Knowledge of God and of ourselves”); and any Thomas Watson, or Charnock’s *Existence and Attributes of God*. Notice how these authors revel in God’s Being, Blessedness, and then live for God’s glory. Think how they think on our Sovereign Creator God- -then go and turn on the television. (Disclaimer: I am not against TV *per se*; I am against us *Amusing Ourselves to death* and not Amusing truly amusing ourselves by being obedient to our God and finding true purpose in glorifying God). TV is incredibly shallow when you compare it with such things, but most Christians have a heavy diet of TV that does not separate them from the rest of the world. TV can be entertaining, but like with anything else, it must be done with disciplined moderation! Meditate on God’s Word and his Works- - the God of Creation who has revealed himself to us! Meditate on the thoughts this will produce in you- - and the wisdom you will gain from it in your everyday life when you place him first in your lives!

- Before anything else existed God *did* Moses wrote *In the Beginning, God created all things* (that is, heaven and earth- -the universell!). Do you realize what this truth of the Sovereign Creator would have taught the Israelites concerning the obedience they owed to God before entering the Promised Land (remember it was written after the Exodus from Egypt and prior to entering the Promised Land)? God gave them his Law, his revealed will at Sinai! Do you realize why the Law as the revealed will of God is important to us in light of the Creator's Nature and Being? In other words, it revealed their duty and ultimate purpose in life! Think about it:
- **Example: Commandments:** (1) No other gods!; (2) No images- -man the image; (3) God's Name- - very Holy; (4) Sabbath rest; (5-10) Love for neighbor, etc.
- As creatures, all things should be done in accordance with God's will; there is absolutely no excuse. (No "ifs, ands, and buts about it" my mother used to tell me when she commanded my obedience). All things should be done in accordance with his will and for his glory. There was a "time" (as we would say it), when there was only one will- - *the will of God!* Only one Being who exists eternally in unity and Trinity! There was no glory sought except in the Divine Being! God gloried in his Divine self! This is our Creator and Redeemer, people of God!

B. God condescends to create a Kingdom.

- **God did not create because he needed something:** As some have taught concerning creation, God was not experiencing *Divine Loneliness* (that is a contradiction in terms!). God is perfectly satisfied and blessed - -he needs nothing, including us! He did not create the world because he needed something, but in order to communicate himself to it! This is why, the glory of God is the ultimate end, *telos*, of creation! The glory of God, God's glory revealed *in*, as well as *through*, his creation, was the purpose and end of creation.
- God creates out of nothing a peaceable Kingdom that was "very good" according to the Divine Judgment. The creation of the heavens and the earth was "very good" and pleasing to the will of God. His creatures' wills were to be conformed to his will (the Eternal will); his creatures' end and purpose was to glorify his Creator- - in him alone was he to glory! This is the way things were created to be; in other words, this is the way things *ought to be!*
- Israel was to be reminded by Moses through the Book of Genesis that there was only one Sovereign God (this is Monotheism - -"Hear, O Israel"). They were entering a land God had promised to Abraham before the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus. The Promised Land was God's pure electing grace to poor sinners. In this land, Israel was to be witnesses to other fallen Kingdoms who had been dispersed at Babel. God separated Israel so that she would witness to the profound original purpose of God in creating a Kingdom for himself- - that is, prior to the fatal fall!

- Israel was given the Divine Law, the revealed will of God. The will of God that had existed from eternity, from age to age. This Law, this revealed will of God was to be communicated to all the nations of the earth who were following their own perverse wills and laws, and ultimately glorying in themselves. God's people were to show that the only true and real purpose as creatures of God is to be found in glorifying God- - the Creator of all things!
- Israel would be tempted to succumb to their own wills and live for the glory of their own kingdom, rather than God's Kingdom. They would be tempted to "do right in their own eyes" as the Book of Judges sadly records for us. They would be tempted to live like the other pagan nations who inhabited the Promised Land and be tempted to follow after other gods, who were really no gods at all!
- IOW: Israel would be tempted to "be like the other nations" around them - - other creatures of God, but those creatures who did not know God! Their desire became not separation and holiness, but desired to "fit in" and to conform to the ways of the sinful kingdoms. This happened because they did not conform to God's perfect will revealed in his Law.
- As the people of God in any age, we are all tempted to follow after our own ways and be conformed to this world. We sometimes walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of mockers. But we must remember to delight ourselves in the Law of the Lord and on the Law of God, meditate both day and night. As God had told the Israelites, so he teaches us, he was their Redeemer who brought them "out of Egypt" but he was also the Sovereign Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth!
- The will of God is our standard for living and conduct because God is Creator. This is the will of God who existed in Unity and Trinity from eternity! He does not change; neither does his holy and perfect will. As the people of God you need to have a true understanding of the absolute, Sovereign, Majestic, Creator God. He who is perfect in attributes and condescending in his love and grace by creating us creatures!

Conclusion

- The study of our Sovereign Creator God teaches us about who he is and the allegiance we owe to him, and our true purpose as his creatures! If you want to know how things *should be, or ought to be*, look to God's creation where he declared all things "good"! All things in heaven and earth were created to serve God's holy, just, and good purpose and will. All things in heaven and earth were created for the end of glorifying God and enjoying him forever!
- But although that was the original purpose of God, man sought after disobedience, fulfillment in himself and his own desires, as well as sought his own glory! God glorified himself even in this! The Creator God became man so that he might fulfill his own law, by his own perfect obedience on our behalf. He died in order to remove the curse of the

law, but was raised from the dead and ascended to God's right hand! Jesus has sent the Advocate, the Spirit of God to teach us all things. He has given us a first fruits of his Spirit so that we might die to ourselves and live for the glory of God through obedience to his revealed and eternal will!! As Christians, our obedience has been made possible again *in Christ*.

- Christ is not only the Mediator of Creation, but by God's glorious grace, he is the Mediator of the Re-Creation! In Christ, we have been made new creatures! The Apostle Paul sums up these truths in Ephesians 2:1-10:

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- What is beyond our full comprehension, yet revealed in Scripture, is that God before the foundation of the earth chose to create, chose even to allow the fall to occur (because God ordains everything that comes to pass), yet lovingly elected his people in Christ. In the execution of his decrees- -that is, what he decreed to come to pass in time and history- - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—God created! This is Our Sovereign Creator God!
- Nothing is more essential to, and determinative of the Christian's life than that the end of all things is the glory of God...All things have their *beginning* and their *end* in God!
- This is why in the Book of Revelation, we read these marvelous words, and we sing along with the redeemed saints and angels:

8 *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory an honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

LORD WILLING, NEXT SERMON WE WILL CONSIDER "CREATION OUT OF NOTHING" AND THE CREATION AS REVELATION OF GOD'S BEING AND GOODNESS TO ALL MEN!

CRB