

The first verse of the Bible

The first thing we need to know about our origins is that God is there, God is real, God is unique, and God is the Lord and Master of everything. All of this is taught in the very first verse of the Bible.

- **The starting point of**

It is not an accident that the Bible begins in the way it does. The fact that God is there as the Creator of the universe is the start of all healthy thinking, all true worship, and it is the starting point of true godliness.

- **All healthy thinking**

Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 is the story of the creation of the world. God is pictured as a workman who works for six days and then rests for a seventh day. Genesis 1:1 is not a title for the section, but is rather the opening sentence of verses 1–5.

- **All true worship**

- **All true godliness**

We must look at Genesis 1:1 carefully, considering its wording, its teaching and its implication for our lives.

Genesis 1:1 The Wording

1. Consider first **the wording of Genesis 1:1**. *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'*

- **In the beginning**

In the beginning... It does not say in the beginning 'of' anything. It simply talks about 'the' beginning. It is an absolute beginning. This phrase comes also in John 1:1 *'In the beginning the Word was already there...'* It refers to the beginning of everything, before history, as far back as your mind can imagine.

- **God – the creator**

God... This is the first time the word 'God' is used in the Bible. It is worth noticing that the names and words for God are often used in a careful way. The word 'God' is the ordinary word that even unbelieving people use. Its meaning is defined here. 'God', in the rest of the Bible, means 'the God of creation', the Creator of the universe. Later when we see God interacting with men and women, we shall find a different word being used, the word 'Yahweh' or '**LORD**'. But 'God' is the common and ordinary word, meaning the mighty One who created us. 'God' is a word that stresses God's power. It takes its meaning from this chapter.

The first mention of God in the Bible refers to what He does. The Bible does not give any abstract, philosophical ideas about God. God is not known apart from what He does and what He says. The only God is the God of the Bible, the God of creation, the God of Abraham, the God who came in Jesus. From Genesis 1:1 onwards this word 'God' will mean 'the sovereign creator-God who revealed Himself in Israel'. Later on the term 'Yahweh' will be used, more with reference to salvation. It means 'the God who redeems by the blood of a lamb'. But here Genesis 1:1 introduced God as the creator-God.

• **Created**

Created... The Bible only uses the word 'create' with God as the subject. It never has any man or woman as a subject. It never says any person 'created' anything. Nowadays we often speak of people being 'creative'. It is alright to speak that way but we ought to notice that the Bible specially reserves the word 'create' for things that only God can do.

Then the word is always used of something happening which is new and extraordinary. Also, we note that the word is never used mentioning any kind of material being used. God does not create 'out of' something else. 'Create' means 'bring into existence without using pre-existing material'. The word is used of other things besides creating the world. It is also used of God's work of salvation. ¹ New life is also 'created' when a person is in Christ.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17

• **The heavens and the earth**

The heavens and the earth. This is a way of saying 'absolutely everything'. When you get a pair of words like this, 'heavens ... earth', it is a Hebrew way of expressing totality. The phrase 'from Dan to Beersheba' means 'throughout all Israel from the north to the south'. This making an expression out of a pair of opposite words is a way of saying 'every single thing that there is', the heavens (what we see when we look up) and the earth (what we see when we look down) and everything in between.

The teaching of Genesis 1:1

2. Consider next **the teaching of Genesis 1:1.**

The Bible never tries to prove the existence of God. All people know that God is real. The Bible simply starts talking about Him. '*In the beginning God...*'

• **God exists**

• **Matter is not eternal**

Genesis 1:1 excludes the idea that matter is eternal. The stuff this world is made of has not always existed. Material things, the elements of the universe, once did not exist.

• **God created everything out of nothing**

It teaches that God created everything from nothing, that is, without using pre-existing material. Everything that there is, is created by God.

• **God and creation are distinct**

It contradicts pantheism, the idea that everything is God, and that the universe is divine. Pantheism is not true. We must never worship the world. '*In the beginning, God created...*' There is a distinction between God and the stuff of which the universe is made. In the beginning God was there, but the heavens and the earth were not there. God created them.

• **God is utterly self sufficient**

God is utterly self-sufficient. God once did not have anything there other than Himself. '*The God who made the world and all the things in it, the One who is Lord of heaven and earth ... is not served by human hands as though He needed anything. He is the One who gives to everyone life and breath and everything*'¹. God does not need anything outside of Himself. He depends on nothing; everything depends upon Him.

¹ Acts 17:24-25

Genesis 1:1 The wider implications

3. Consider next **the wider implications of Genesis 1:1.**

This verse gives us the background to the rest of the Bible. This is the background to everything we need to know about sin, about redemption, about history, about the future.

• **God has rights over us**

God created us. This means that God has rights over us. The reason why sin is sin is that God is our Maker. He has sovereign rights over this universe. Any person who lives out of touch with His creator is rebelling against the One who knows everything and can do anything with the world He made.

• **God is able to control the world**

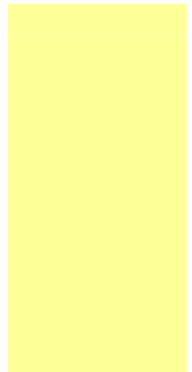
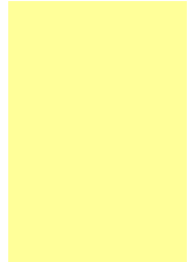
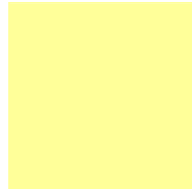
This is the background to God's ability to control the world. The reason why God can control this world is because He is the One who made it in the first place. He knows how it works. The laws of nature are His laws. This verse gives us the background to redemption. Salvation is God doing something about His world. When this world fell into sin and darkness, God was not willing to let it go. God is saving the world that He made in the beginning.

• **God is capable of handling our lives**

This verse means that God is capable of handling our lives. Imagine you have some machine, and then it goes wrong. What do you do? Eventually you might have to say, 'Let us send it back to the one who made it. Back to the maker!' But it is this way with us. God made us. Yet we have become broken. Is there any answer? Yes, the answer is 'Back to the Maker!' He is the One who knows how we function. He knows what is good for us. He knows what is bad for us. If we wish to function aright in this world, we must follow the Maker's instructions, the way He designed the world and the way He designed us.

• **God is Saviour**

When God sent Jesus He was making a way for His world to come back to Him. Out of the old fallen world which He made, He brings into being a new creation¹. The new creation is His determination not to abandon the old creation. Because God is Creator, He is able to be Saviour.



1
2 Corinthians
5:17

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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