

Life's Big Questions

Part 3 – What is God?

Genesis 1

What we believe about God is the single most significant factor in shaping our worldview. What we believe about God will determine our attitudes and actions towards others. It will shape our approach to every conceivable ethical and moral issue such as sexual boundaries, violence, honesty, and materialism. What we believe about God will determine whether we love those with whom we differ or hate them. It will determine whether we responsibly steward natural resources, waste them, or worship them. Our theology will determine whether we treat people as God's image-bearers or as nothing more than a product of evolution. Sloppy theology leads to sloppy living.



It makes sense, therefore, that the creation account is a rich source of knowledge of God. Indeed, God dominates the Book of Genesis from the very beginning. God is the subject of more than two thirds of the sentences in the creation account. Since the Israelites were surrounded by pagan peoples who worshiped many gods, it was vital for them to have an authoritative witness to the truth concerning the nature and character of God. In our own day when even professing Christians tend to appeal to their own preferences or imaginations as authoritative guides for determining what God is like, the biblical witness to the nature and character of God is as needful as it has always been.

1. God is Eternal

“In the beginning...”

- The opening words of the Bible establish God as being unbound by time. “The beginning” was not God’s beginning for he has always been. He was present “in the beginning.” And while the eternity of God is a great mystery it makes perfect sense. Since something cannot come from nothing, an eternal Creator is the only explanation for the existence of creation.

2. God is Unique

“In the beginning God...”

- There is only one God. The doctrine that there is only one God (monotheism) was one of the defining marks of the Israelites and, later, Christians. The opening words of Genesis confronted the polytheism (many gods) and pantheism (all is god) of the surrounding peoples.

3. God is Creator

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

God’s extraordinary power is seen in his work as Creator. The word translated “created” (*bara*) is only ever used in reference to God. It assumes the powerful creative work of God which requires no pre-existing materials. God created out of nothing (creation *ex nihilo*) all things by the power of his command (creation by *fiat*).

4. God Speaks

“And God said...”

The creation account repeatedly portrays God as speaking. God is pleased to reveal himself and he does so principally by speaking. Genesis itself is the revelation of God given by way of inspiration through Moses.

5. God is Purposeful and Orderly

Genesis 1:3-25

- Every stage of creation is attributed to God – the one and only Creator. And the creation account portrays God as proceeding systematically and orderly. The creation proceeds from the decisive action of God. The refrain “and God said,” is repeated 8 times. This indicates order and purpose. “These eight specific commands, calling all things into being, leave no room for notions of a universe that is self-existent, or struggled for, or random, or a divine emanation.” (Kidner, 46).
- Because God is orderly, his creation reflects orderliness. There are “laws” which govern the universe. These physical laws make chemistry and art and engineering and flight and communication and cooking and reproduction possible.

6. God is Trinity

Vs. 2 – *ruah Elohim* – “Spirit of God.”

Vs. 26 – “Let us make man in our own image.”

- The Bible is a progressive revelation. That is, it gradually unfolds the truths concerning God and his redemptive purpose. And while a fuller understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity will require the New Testament, it is nevertheless being established in the opening words of Genesis. The creation account includes agency of both Word and Spirit. There is also an inter-Trinitarian dialogue which occurs prior to the creation of man.

7. God is Sovereign

“And God said...and it was so.”

- This repeated formula points to the fact that God has all power to carry out all of his plans flawlessly. When God commands, it is done. He is never contingent upon any force outside of himself. He is sovereign over all things. Therefore he is able to command all things to do his bidding.
- Vs. 9 – God gathers up the oceans. He is sovereign over the deepest of mysteries and greatest of dangers.
- Vs. 16 – The simplicity of the creation of the stars.
- Vs. 21 – God made all the creatures of the sea. We know more about the surface of the moon than we do about the sea’s inhabitants. And yet God has made them all.

8. God is Good

“...and it was good.”

- God declares each stage of his creative work to be “good.” His final estimation of his work is that it was “very good.” This is not simply a reference to the functionality of the created order. In pronouncing it “very good” God was also making a moral valuation. The goodness of the created order is reflective of the goodness of the Creator. The present corruption and decay of this fallen world has still not erased creation’s testimony to the goodness of God. Even in our sin, God’s goodness toward us has not ceased.