

This Sentence Changed the World

Genesis 1:1

Today we begin our new sermon series, "Genesis 1-11: God, Humanity, and Our Biggest Questions." The very first sentence has influenced our world tremendously, and probably more than any sentence ever written.

(1) "In the beginning..."

- The beginning of what? The beginning of the (hi)story of *everything* (except God Himself).
- And time itself had a beginning, according to standard scientific teaching
- Question: why does this phrase make a difference?

(2) "In the beginning, **God**..."

- One God, already there from the beginning!
 - Why this matters: this should inspire a healthy fear of God (*what kind of being is this?*) See Jeremiah 10:10–12.
- One God, not battling gods, in this creation account
 - Compare with the petty violence among the gods in *The Enuma Elish*
 - Instead of God, other accounts replace him with Chaos, gods, and/or a cosmic egg.
 - See Hesiod's *Theogony*, Chinese myths, Hindu texts, etc.
- Question: Why does this matter? Consider ethics: right and wrong.

(3) "In the beginning, God **created the heavens and the earth**."

- This means the entire universe. God created what's up there and what's down here, which is a device (a merism) for referring to everything.
- Creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing"). See Hebrews 11:3.
 - This contrasts with ancient pagan mythologies, where gods often form the world from pre-existing materials.
- Again, what's the importance of this?

Echo of Genesis 1:1 in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

- The Word (*logos*) is the eternal Son of God, who becomes the human Jesus (John 1:14).
- **Hope and renewal: If there was a beginning, there can also be new beginnings—fresh starts, redemption, re-creation!**

Questions for Reflection and Application

1. Why does it matter if this world emerged from a creative act of God versus a cosmic egg or fighting gods?
2. Should Genesis 1:1 inspire the fear of God? How so?
 - a. To learn about the proper fear of the Lord for a Christian, compare Luke 12:5, Rom 3:18, 2 Cor 7:1, and 1 John 4:18.
3. Genesis 1:1 reveals *your* Creator. John 1:1 reveals *your* Redeemer. Both of these verses use the phrase "In the beginning." Meditate upon God's plan and power.