

Introduction:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." God was in the beginning of everything, therefore I am here to invite you to put God in the beginning of everything you are and do. Be ready, because by the end of this lesson, I'm going to ask you to make a choice. I'm going to ask you to choose God. I'm going to ask you to choose God over everything. In fact, I'm going to ask you to demonstrate that choice by committing to be part of our "In the Beginning, God" Bible reading plan and daily devotion. **Genesis 1:1** gives us some phenomenal reasons to choose God. I'd like to share them with you, and having learned them, I'd like to invite you to put God in the beginning.¹

Discussion:

I. Denies atheism—We have a refuge.

- A. "In the beginning, God..." Perhaps it goes without saying, but this statement denies atheism. Atheism claims no God, no Creator, no ruler, no sovereign, no power greater than us. But **Genesis 1:1** shatters those claims. **Genesis 1:1** says not only there is a God, but this God is the source of all things. He is the source of the universe, the source of life, the source of us. We owe our very existence to this Creator. Therefore, we owe our allegiance to this Creator.
- B. The presence of the divine Creator makes demands on us. There is someone who has authority to command and direct us. There is someone who has the power to judge us. It may be because people want to dispute passages like **Ephesians 4:17-6:9** and **Hebrews 9:27** that they want to dispute **Genesis 1:1**. We must remove atheism from our worldview not only in ideological sense but also the practical one that allows us to think we are our own god and have the highest authority over our own lives. **Genesis 1:1** denies atheism and claims we must submit to God.
- C. Many see this as a negative, but truly it is a great blessing. **Genesis 1:1** demonstrates there is a power greater than ourselves. And oh, what power! As **Psalms 73:23-28** demonstrates, God's direction and judgment is actually for our good. He upholds us, guides us, counsels us, and then receives us into glory. The atheists would have us believe we have no one to rely on, but **Genesis 1:1** explains that we have a refuge. What a blessing!

II. Denies materialism—We have a hope.

- A. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." There is the earth and there is the sky, space, the universe. But in addition to that there is something else. There is God. There is God who is of different "stuff" than the earth and the heavens. This denies materialism. Materialism claims there is no spirit, no divine; there is only matter and energy. **Genesis 1:1** denies this. Not only is there material stuff, there is spiritual stuff, and even divine stuff. There is more to existence than what we can see, taste, touch, and feel. There is more to us than that.
- B. Look around you. This life, this world, this universe is not all there is. This lets us know there is more to life than feeding, clothing, protecting these physical forms. There is more to life than competing for material resources. This reminds us that what happens here is not nearly as important as what will happen in the hereafter. As **Ecclesiastes 12:6** explains, this body made of dust will eventually die, but the spirit will return to God. That moment is what matters. It is because **Genesis 1:1** denies materialism that we have a hope of something more (**I Peter 1:3-5**). **Genesis 1:1** reminds us not to get distracted by the material pursuits around us, there is more than this material world.

¹ The outline for this sermon was inspired from the following quote:

"This simple sentence denies *atheism*, for it assumes the Being of God. It denies *polytheism*, and among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil--for it confesses the one eternal Creator. It denies *materialism*, for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies *pantheism*, for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies *fatalism*, for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being" (Cottrell, Jack, What the Bible Says about God the Creator, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, 1983, p. 106, quoting Revere F Weidner, Theologia, or The Doctrine of God, Revell, New York, 1902, p. 80).

III. Denies polytheism—We have a confidence.

- A. “In the beginning, God...” not gods. There is one God. As the Shema of the Jews would go on to say in **Deuteronomy 6:4**, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one” (ESV). There are not competing deities that war with each other as pagan idolatry almost always includes. You don’t have to worry that Loki is trying to destroy the gods or take over the world. The world did not come about because Marduk defeated Tiamet. You don’t have to worry that Gaea, Mother Earth, the Titans, or other divine beings are trying to rise up, defeat the gods, and destroy the world as we know it. There is God, the one, true and living God. We can say along with Paul in **I Timothy 1:17**: “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (ESV).
- B. This denies the dualistic ideas of two divine beings, one dark and one light, one good and one evil. We do not have to worry that there is some other divine being who might bring some reasonable challenge to our good and great God. We know who started all that is, and we know who will bring it to an end. Do not get me wrong. There are enemies of God. There are some too powerful for us (cf. **Ephesians 6:12**). But there are none too powerful for our one God. We do not have to worry, wondering who will win. We can be confident. The one God will!

IV. Denies pantheism—We have a guide.

- A. While materialism says all that exists is matter and energy, pantheism says the spiritual is all there is. The extreme forms will tell us that what we perceive as matter is merely an illusion. Pantheism declares there is the divine and it permeates all that is and is made up of all that is. We are each part of the divine universe. Some forms suggest it is fragmented and we are on a journey to be reunited with the divine oneness. A popular form of pantheism is expressed in the Star Wars movies as they talk about The Force moving in and through us, directing us.
- B. **Genesis 1:1** denies pantheism. **Genesis 1:1** presents the existence of God before all things and separate from all created things. Pantheism preaches searching for the divine within us. It proclaims that each of us is a little bit of the divine whole and if we want to know how to connect to the divine, we need to search within us. But **Genesis 1:1** says this just isn’t so. If we want to know how to live in a pleasing way to the divine, we don’t want to look within, we want to look without, to God and His revelation of Himself (cf. **I Corinthians 2:11-13**). He will guide us, if we will pursue Him. If we want to connect to the divine, we must look for the divine outside of ourselves and invite Him in (**Ephesians 3:14-19**).

V. Denies fatalism—We have a choice.

- A. Fatalism declares everything is because it has to be. In fatalism, there is an impersonal force that dominates time, matter, energy, and even spirit. But **Genesis 1:1** denies this. The universe does not exist because it could be no other way. The universe exists because God chose to create it. He was not forced, fated, or pre-determined. If He were, then there is something in addition to God, more powerful than God that really did the creating. There is something to which even God must bow His knee. But **Genesis 1:1** asserts that the universe is here because of God and no one or nothing else.
- B. And this speaks to the love of God. The universe is not here because God was fated to put it here. You are not here because God had to put you here. Look around you. This all exists because God wanted it to exist. You exist because God wanted you to exist. Think about that for a minute. God wants you. Of the infinite possibilities of people to create, God brought you into existence. Too many people think God is a universal boogey man looking for reasons to get rid of people and zap them into hell. But that simply doesn’t coincide with creation. God created because He wanted to. He created you because He wants you. He chose to create you.
- C. And this explains why you have a choice. When you sinned (**Romans 3:23**), you earned death and destruction (**Romans 6:23**). But God was not fated to destroy you. He is the master of His own destiny and He chose to save you because He wants you (**I Timothy 2:3-5**). God gave Jesus as a ransom for your sins because He loves you. What love?!!! He did that for you even while you were sinful, weak, and ungodly (cf. **Romans 5:6-8**). And that gives us a choice. God wants you so badly, He sacrificed Jesus. How badly do you want God?

Conclusion:

In the beginning, God. In the beginning of the world, God. In the beginning of time, God. In the beginning of you, God. God was in the beginning, but most people put Him in the end. Despite His amazing choice of us, too many of us choose other things over Him. Will you join us this year in putting God in the beginning of everything you are and do? Will you choose God? Will you put Him first?