

Gen 1:1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (NASB)

Appropriately enough, the Bible starts at the beginning. It doesn't pick up in the middle of the story, even though this book was written thousands of years after the Beginning. Rather, the Holy Spirit builds his revelations at the beginning.

One interesting thing to me is that this beginning is a narrative beginning, not a logical beginning. Scripture doesn't seek to provide some sort of "self-evident axiom" as the basis of its argument. Rather, through Scripture, God tells a story (a true one). God chooses to communicate His Truth not primarily in syllogism, but in narrative. In fact, as I think about it, almost all of Scripture is narrative in nature, with the exception of the Proverbs and the New Testament Epistles. And, even the Epistles are narrative at times... This is bad news for the traditional theologian. But, it's great news for the postmodern Christian! We live in a world that is seeking to embrace narratives again. Because, ultimately, there are truths that can't be captured by Objective Empirical Science or Deductive Philosophy. There are truths that can only be learned by personal or sympathetic experience. Postmodernism accepts this concept. Amazing how the Bible seems to be written for the postmodern world! Yet, this should come as no surprise. The Bible was written for people. And, though people have become fallen, and are often duped by the Father of Lies and His servants (who are often well-meaning, but misled), people will only bear with a particular set of Lies for so long before even Fallen man will reject them and set about seeking Truth again. (Generally to fall to a new Lie, of course.) God has given each of us the Light of Christ, by which He enlightens every man. Often, men will not surrender to the Light, for their deeds are evil, and they want their Evils to be hidden both from their fellow men and from their own memories. And, certainly from their Righteous Judge. But, enough Light is generally permitted by man that, given time, they will become dissatisfied with Lies. This glimmer of Light better explains the God-seeking tendency in man than the "God-sized hole" theory, I believe. God made us in His image. And, as marred as that Imago Dei has become, we still WANT to believe in something that is True. But, in as far as we resist the Light, we are incapable of seeing Lies for what they are. Man desires God because Man carries the image of God. And God loves Truth. So, man seeks Truth, and all Truth flows from God. And, many of the truths that compose Truth are in God's creation around us.

For in the beginning, when time began, God created the heavens and the earth. And the heavens and earth declare His Glory.

Today, I was talking with Meg about Wicca. (And how I saw lots of books about it in Half-Priced Books.) She said that one of her friends wanted to know if it sinful to look into Wicca. Of course, it depends on the reason for the research. But, amidst the conversation, it became clear what this friend liked about Wicca: its reverence for nature!

How sad that Christianity is not seen by many (actually, any that I know of!) as having a reverence for nature! The first thing that the Holy Spirit thinks man needs to read about is how God created all the wonders of nature. And, if Creation is God's workmanship,

then should we not revere it, as we revere the work of a great artist or author? Yet, we get so bogged down in our lives that we don't have time to even notice nature, let alone appreciate, revere, or meditate on it. Yet, we are surrounded by the Creation of God. Look up and appreciate a cloud. Appreciate the form of the cloud. Appreciate the purpose that the cloud serves in providing shade and rain. Or, if you are busy all day, look up at the moon or stars at night. Each of them was put in place. And put them in place in such a way that about 2000 years ago they caught the eyes of astronomers who interpreted their movements rightly, and went to worship the King whom the stars announced. The very King who put them where they were. For without Him, nothing was made that was made.

Paganism (and its cousin Wicca) can be considered a good starting point for the Christian faith (as I believe any religion can be!). See, in modern Christianity, we have become inbred and fearful because we have lost sight of the Imago Dei that every man carries. Our focus on the fall and sin has made us forget that the original state was not totally abandoned. Though the innocence was lost, many parts of that nature are with us. But, they are in an imperfect form. So, though we carry in us a great desire for Truth, our vision is blurred. Sometimes, the blurriness of our vision makes us give up hope, and we abandon hope. But, for most, there is a continuous search for Truth, though they may occasionally despair and give up. Yet, the call of Truth, the desire for knowing the Truth is still within us. Satan understands this. So, non-Christian religions are not totally wrong. Rather, they are imperfect. Incomplete. Half-truths. This is what Paul understood when he became like the Jews to win the Jews and like the Greeks to win the Greeks. Ultimately, all half-truths lead to God's Truth, once the missing pieces are added, and the wrong ones are thrown out! That is the purpose of Christianity. That is why God has given us the special revelation of Christ, recorded in Scripture. This special revelation completes the incomplete faiths. Our goal then should not be to totally discredit other religions. Rather, we must demonstrate to them how Christianity fills the gaps in the system better than the lie parts of the half-truths they have. This is the way the early church did missions. (I'm reminded of when Paul saw the altar to the Unknown god.)

Nature points up to God. And, if we refuse to use this path in experiencing God, our experience of Him will be incomplete.

So, take time today to give glory to God for his Creation. For a scampering squirrel, or a glittering star, or a towering tree, or a babbling stream. The natural world is beautiful, and it was placed here for our benefit. So, let us give thanks to God for the gift we have been given.

Gen 1:2 And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

And God created the heavens and the earth, and it was empty.

Let that sink in for a moment. God, the Creator of All, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, created an empty world.

He could have created the world full of life. He could have created the world, complete, and full of Life in one Word. But, He didn't. He created it. But, not only that. God, the Timeless One, allowed time to pass before He finished His work. He created the canvas from NOTHING, and then, rather than speaking the painting into existence immediately, he looked at the blank canvas. As much as I try not to act like I can understand God's Mind, I can't help but wonder... What did God think at that time? In that Time of Darkness before light knew existence, did God move over the surface of the waters and think about the things that would happen on that Earth that would be done in merely 6 days? Did He think about the Fall, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Final Judgment? Did He reconsider what He was doing? The orthodox answer, of course, is "No". God does not need to repent, as He does no wrong. Therefore, God does not need to meditate over His decisions. They simply flow from His perfect nature. And, here God is. Waiting.

While these questions are in my mind when I think about this passage, I also can't help but come to another conclusion. One that is far more "orthodox". One that makes all the good Christians sit a little easier. God wasn't "thinking" in the sense we think about thinking. He wasn't really "waiting" in the conventional sense either. Rather, God was, as he does all through this chapter, "establishing". And what was He establishing? He was establishing an important thing. A thing that evangelicals forget a lot. He was establishing a huge concept. Process. Creation was a process. But, why? Why would an omnipotent God make Creation a process? He didn't have to. He could have \*bing\* finished creation in the blink of an eye. After all, we will all be changed in the twinkling of an eye! So, why not make the Garden in the same amount of time? Why give the world 6 days before any "real" action happens?

Here I'm going to make fundamentalists mad, I think. So, yes, I believe in the 6 day literal creation. Don't kill me, please. But, I think that the real meaning of this verse is behind the words, or rather, ABOVE the words. Beyond the words. For a minute, let's look behind the literal (though without forgetting it). Let's try to answer the question why, not by looking at the Creator and His nature. Rather, let's look at what the Creator is trying to tell us about OUR nature.

There are so many layers here, I'm finding it hard to separate them in my mind. So, here's the first (and I hope I don't forget the second as I type this one!).

We are bound in time. We are bound by the concept of process. Therefore, God established the idea of process before He created us. He is telling us "If I, the Omnipotent God, who needs not wait, can CHOOSE to wait, then you too, who are Creatures bound by time can wait." God was teaching us to be patient. God doesn't NEED to be patient, but He is. In His love and mercy, He is also patient. Patient with US. And how do we return the favor? We grow impatient with Him. "God, I want an answer NOW." God is God. He doesn't need to do anything, because He doesn't need

anything. But, He does desire something. He desires what is best for us. For you and me. And He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our NEEDS better than we do. So, where do we get off telling Him we need an answer now? Do we really think we know better than God? Sometimes we do. But, I think, more often than not, we simply do what people have done for years. We forget. We forget who we are and who God is. We treat Him like a coworker or a child, or a servant. We don't treat Him like our Eternal Lover, like our Precious Redeemer, like our King and Creator. We don't trust Him to know our needs better than we do. Sure, we SAY we do. But, we don't. We want to be in the driver's seat.

And why shouldn't we? After all, God may allow darkness to persist over the surface of the deep! That doesn't sound fun to me... But, I've bled over to the next layer.

I think that Gen 1 can also be seen as an allegory of a Christian's spiritual creation. Of course, the allegory isn't perfect. But, I may expand on this if I think it keeps working in later verses. But, I think it works for this one.

Think about it, when we are born, we are in darkness. We are formless and void. We are, spiritually empty and blind. But, we are not alone. The Spirit of God is with us. Waiting. Waiting to offer us the Light which will come on the First Day. Some claim that Spirit is only with believers. To a certain extent, I think this is true. The Spirit only indwells believers. But, the Spirit is beside each of us that hasn't actively pushed Him away (at least I believe this). The Spirit is with us, convicting us of sin, and calling us to repentance and righteousness in Christ Jesus. But, it is dark, and we cannot see the Spirit. Sure, looking back on my life I know that God put me in a Christian family because, truth be told, I very well may have never found Him any other way! But, I say that wrongly. I never did "find Him". Rather, He was always there, calling me, and I surrendered to Him. And, only then was I indwelt by the Spirit.

But, I think there's another layer here as I can foresee that allegory breaking down in a few verses. I think that the first chapter of Genesis is a prophecy of human history in a way. God created the heavens and the earth, and, though not immediately, man Fell into darkness. But, the Spirit of God was there waiting for the proper time for the Light of the World to shine forth.

Now, some of you will think that I'm just pulling interpretations out of a hat, and that I'm copping out by not choosing one. Well, maybe I am. But, I have a belief.

I believe in the Living Word. That is, the Bible is not static. Sure, its words don't change. Rather, with each reading, and each meditation, they offer to us new insight into the Creator and His Creation. That's what this Commentary is all about. I'm not trying to make historical claims, or even academic claims. Rather, I'm trying to use Scripture to illuminate our experience. (And, conversely, our experience to illuminate Scripture!)

Ultimately, though, if we're honest, we all read interpretations into Scripture that the Scripture itself doesn't demand. We become hardliners about Old/Young Earth or about

Transsubstantiation/Representation or about a number of things. But, we each read the Scripture to the best of our ability and understanding, and we still disagree. Because, well, we read ourselves and our understanding INTO the text. This isn't necessarily bad. Rather, it is unavoidable. Trust me, I've tried to take myself out of my relationship with God. You know, in total surrender, I wanted my will to be totally subjected to God's. But, this just isn't possible. Ultimately, I am still me. And, that's what God made. He made ME. He made YOU. And we each have our perspectives that we come from. And, ultimately, it's all for a reason. But, we're dishonest if we start treating our interpretations (regardless whether they came from us or from some Great Theologian or Early Church Father) as THE interpretation. Augustine offered a great statement about this. In the last part of his Confessions, he went into a very abstract discussion of Genesis 1. Then he finally said (I paraphrase), "Sure, I've offered a bunch of interpretations for this passage. But, can't someone as smart as God mean for there to be more than one interpretation that resonates with the Truth?" I think the right answer is "Yes".

So, don't get too caught up on your interpretation, even if you and someone else interpret the same passage differently. Ultimately, there's no reason that God can't have meant both, or more specifically, there's no reason that God can't have meant you to read it YOUR way, and for the other person to read it THEIR way, and, in turn, for you to learn from each other's readings.

So, let's focus on being learners. Ultimately, I have a lot more to learn than I have to teach, so I'll take lessons where I can get them. Sure, maybe I won't agree with your interpretation, but maybe it just has Truth in it that I'm not yet ready for. After all, learning is also...

A Process.