

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

God Owns It All!

TEXT: Genesis 1

INTRODUCTION: The text today is easy to find. It begins with the very first verse of the Bible, Gen 1:1. Having completed the Book of James, the Lord has put upon my heart for us to examine some of the primary teachings of His Word that are foundational to our walk with Christ. Each of these fundamental concepts begin in the Book of Genesis, but none of them end there.

Over the course of this series my desire is for us to take some of the most basic principles God gives us on living our lives successfully and for His glory, seeing how the teaching began and how it is developed and completed in the rest of Scripture so that we can put it into personal practice in our lives.

A good place to begin is always the beginning, and that is what we do today. We will start by reading Genesis 1:1 and just a few other verses of chapter 1. Let's stand to demonstrate to God that we desire to be attentive to His Word.

Genesis 1 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.

21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so.

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.

31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

When God gave Moses the first five books of the Bible, collectively called the Torah or the Pentateuch, the Holy Spirit began by declaring how the universe and the

planet upon which we live came to be.

The testimony of those words is exceedingly simple and clear. God made it all.

- **Before He began His work of creation, only God existed.** Nothing else, not time, not space, not matter, not energy. Nothing but God.
- **God created all that there is.** Some things He created by simply speaking the word, they came into existence. An example of this is light. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In other cases, as with the sun and moon, God used the matter and energy He already created and shaped them into their respective forms of sun and moon. Still, the same bottom line concerning their origin exists for both cases. God made them!
- **All that God created was good, very good.** At the end of God's creative work, there was nothing in existence that was less than perfect. There was no sin, no decay, no death. Everything God made was very good!

Now, I confess to you, that every time I read these words of Genesis 1, I naturally want to speak about these verses from the viewpoint of apologetics, offering to those who hear the reasons to believe that the testimony of Genesis is true rather than the naturalistic viewpoint that says that our universe had both its origin and formation caused by random chance alone.

I have this constant desire, because I have not always believed the testimony of Genesis 1. I was a licensed, ordained Baptist Minister for a while, and I still did not believe Genesis 1. So if I was a Baptist preacher and did not believe Genesis 1 was true, I cannot help but think that there could be some people sitting on the pews of a Baptist church who still do not believe Genesis 1 is true. (You do not need to raise your hands.)

But I became convinced by the scientific evidence that Genesis gave a more reasonable account than a naturalistic explanation. And I know the fact that I became convinced of the evidence does not necessarily persuade you, because I'm not so smart, so what does it matter that I became convinced?

But you may not realize that in this matter I keep very good company. Francis Collins received his PhD in quantum mechanics but then decided to become a medical doctor doing research in genetic diseases. He was the Director of the Human Genome Project from 2003 to 2008 when he became the Director of the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Collins was not brought up in church or religion, but during his medical studies, he became convinced by the evidence that there must be a God as the ultimate cause of the universe we observe. Subsequently he, by his own testimony, was born again and became a Christian.

Both the testimony of Scripture and the testimony of the evidence found in the heavens above or within the cells of living beings say with force and clarity: *Bershith bara alohim ath hashamayim veath ha-aretz*, which is the original Hebrew for - In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

I hope you believe that, or if not, that you will do the research and let the evidence

convince you it is true!

But once we do believe this truth, it is knowledge that comes with consequences.

The first of these consequences is actually the title to my message today. Because if God created everything, then everything belongs to Him.

I. GOD OWNS IT ALL!

- **If you make something**
- **from materials that belong to you**
- **using knowledge and skill that you alone possess**
- **what you make belongs to you**

God created everything. Where He shaped something out of existing materials, He had made the materials also. He did it all without benefit of instruction manuals or a chat with creation.com support.

Because God created everything, God owns it all.

II. GOD HAS GIVEN US A SPECIFIC WAY TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS OWNERSHIP: GIVING THE TITHE BACK TO GOD.

- **Tithe means 10%** - 10% of whatever we receive: paycheck, retirement, return on investment, gifts
- **Giving the tithe says to God, "I know this belongs to You."** Giving the tithe of what we earn says, "Lord, I know that I am not receiving this money just because of my good looks, brilliant mind, and ceaseless labor. You made me. You cause my mind to function and my muscles to work. You cause the food You provide to turn into usable energy in my muscles through a process scientists are still trying to fully understand. Lord this 10% I give to You is a small token to say I acknowledge that apart from You, I can do nothing."
- Parents, I urge you to teach your children and teens to tithe. I learned as a child. My SS teacher taught me. On my dad's payday, twice a month, he gave me 1\$ for doing my household chores. I had a little box where I kept my money and few other precious things like a little lizard skeleton I found. I got my \$1 changed and put a dime in another special compartment and took it with me to church.

Karen had also been taught to tithe, and as newlyweds, we gave our tithe to the Lord. It sure wasn't much, and the church never increased its budget because we were members, but it reminded us of the source of every blessing and it was special to God. Every time we put that little bit of money in an envelope, sometimes in pure faith that somehow we would meet all the other obligations, it said to our Lord, "We know everything we have, not just our money, but our lives, our marriage, our tiny garage apartment, is Yours. We are grateful You share it with us."

- That is why **The Spirit spoke through Malachi to say that not bringing God's**

tithe to the storehouse was robbing God.

Malachi 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.

- o **God owns it all.**
- o **He only asks for 10% to acknowledge His ownership.**
- o **When we will not even do that, God calls it robbery.**

Now, let me tell you the best part of all.

III. GOD FURTHER DEMONSTRATES HIS POWER AND GENEROSITY TO THOSE WHO GIVE HIM THE TITHE.

Malachi 3:10–11 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts;

And by the way, the tithe is not just commanded in the Old Testament. Jesus said about the tithe when comparing it to other things that a believer ought to do, “...**These you ought to have done, without leaving the other undone.**” Mt. 23:23

- **God promises abundant blessings to those who tithe.** He does not promise every blessing will be financial, but their value will be far greater than the cost of the tithe to you.
- **God promises to keep the demon known as the “devourer” from eating up your resources.** That does not mean your refrigerator will never break or your tires will not ultimately wear out.

All of our married life together, which has been since she graduated high school, Karen and I have been tithers. We’ve had our stuff break at inconvenient times just like all of you. We just got Karen’s Jeep paid off, and we had to put it in the shop to fix the heater - \$1,000! If it hadn’t been my sweet little wife, I would have bought her an extra sweater instead.

So this does not mean if you tithe, nothing ever goes wrong in the financial plan. But I will tell you this, even when stuff goes wrong, God still proves Himself generous, kind, and able to give and expose resources that we did not have or know were available. Across the years, God has taken care of every need, sometimes in surprising ways.

When I was in seminary, Karen was getting her PhT degree (Put hubby Through), I was going to school full time and working also, but we didn’t have two dimes to rub together at the end of the month. We were really wanting a new sofa. Ours

was so bad and embarrassing when the teens from our church came over. But we never had extra money at the end of the month. One Sunday night while we were at church a huge thunderstorm with strong winds came through. I got a call that a pine tree had fallen on our house. When I got home, sure enough, one of our pines had fallen across the house and one of its limbs drove itself through the roof of the laundry room. But a neighbor's pine fell in our backyard and totally crushed a little greenhouse I had built out of 2x4s and plastic bisqueen. Both insurance companies were willing to pay me cash for the estimated damage, and I did all my own repairs. I don't remember exactly how much I netted in that transaction, but it was enough to buy the sofa.

First steps:

- o **Talk to a believer who tithes.**

Listen, if you are not a tither; if you are not a tithing couple, talk to someone you trust in the church and just ask, "Do you tithe?" I hope you won't have to ask too many people before you get a "Yes." But when you get someone who says they have tithed faithfully for a good while, ask them to tell you about it. Both of you will be blessed by the conversation.

- o **Test God for one month. Key question: Have you done as well or better on 90% as you did on 100%?**

And then, put God to the test. I'm not going to ask you to commit to tithing the rest of your life or even the rest of the year. In fact, I'm not asking for any kind of public commitment this morning. You talk to someone, get their testimony, and then decide you will try it for a month.

At the end of the month see if you are at least as well off or better living on the 90% as you were living on 100%. Don't try to figure out how it's going to work in advance. It will never add up. Listen to what the Lord says,

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, ...And try Me now in this, Says the LORD of hosts,

It is the only place in Scripture God gives us permission to test Him.

- o **When you see the answer is "Yes" commit again, then longer.**

So test Him! One month. If you have done as well or better on 90% as you did on 100%, then commit to another month. You keep trying Him until you are convinced He keeps His Word. Then commit for a year. One day, you will do what we have done, commit to honor God with the tithe for a lifetime – not because we are super spiritual. We have just found God ever faithful. I would rather have 90% and His blessing any day than 100% without it.