

The Big Picture

GOD IN THE CENTER FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

Before There Was a Beginning, There Was God

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psalm 90:2).

Before time existed and before light broke through darkness, God already was. Not lonely. Not incomplete. Not waiting for creation to fulfill Him.

This is the foundation of everything that follows in Scripture. God has always existed and depends on nothing outside Himself for His existence. He has no beginning and will have no end. Psalm 90 reaches back beyond the formation of the earth and declares, “From everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psalm 90:2). Isaiah likewise calls Him “the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28).

Everything we are about to encounter in Scripture exists because God created it, but no one created God. He simply is.

When God later reveals Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He identifies Himself as “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). We will look much more closely at those words when we reach Exodus. For now, they remind us that the God who enters the biblical story is not one part of the created world.

He was already God before there was a world.

And the God who existed before creation is unlike anything within His creation. Isaiah asks, “To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?” (Isaiah 40:18).

There is no one.

He is the everlasting Creator who “does not faint or grow weary” and whose “understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28). The God at the center of the biblical story is not simply greater than everything else we will encounter.

There is no one like Him.

Because God did not need creation in order to exist, He also did not create because something was missing in Him. Paul makes this remarkably clear: “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by

human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24–25).

Notice the direction of dependence. God does not depend upon creation. Creation depends upon God.

Isaiah asks, “Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?” (Isaiah 40:13–14).

The answer is no one. God consulted no one. He learned from no one. He depends on no one.

But God's self-sufficiency does not mean that before creation God was lonely or isolated. The New Testament gives us glimpses beyond Genesis 1:1. John begins his Gospel with words that sound remarkably familiar: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

Before anything was created, the Word already was. A few verses later, John tells us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), identifying the Word as the One who came into the world as Jesus Christ (John 1:17). John also tells us, “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

Jesus, then, did not begin to exist when He was born in Bethlehem. Before creation, the Son already was.

Jesus later prays to the Father, “Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5). Even more strikingly, Jesus says, “You loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

Before creation, the Father loved the Son.

And Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as “the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14). Father, Son, and Spirit did not come into existence when the universe came into existence.

God did not create human beings because He was lonely or needed someone to love Him. He was not waiting for creation to provide something that was lacking within Himself. God was already eternally complete and eternally relational.

And that makes creation all the more remarkable.

God did not create because He needed us. He chose to create. He created us for His glory, to enjoy a relationship with Him (Isaiah 43:7; Acts 17:27).

And creation was not without purpose. The story we're about to follow is not a story in which God is continually reacting to unexpected events and trying to repair His plans. Scripture gives us remarkable glimpses of a purpose that reaches back before creation itself.

Paul describes God's "eternal purpose" realized in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:11) and tells us that God's plan for the fullness of time is "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:9–10). Peter tells us that Christ was foreknown "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20), while Paul speaks of God's grace given to us in Christ "before the ages began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

And then Colossians gives us an even larger view of Christ's place in the story we're about to follow: "For by him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16–17)

Think about what Paul is saying. Everything we are about to encounter in the biblical story ultimately owes its existence to Him. All things were created through Him and for Him. And Christ does not merely belong to the story after His birth in Bethlehem. He is before all things.

Then, just a few verses later, Paul moves from creation to reconciliation, telling us that through Christ God purposes "to reconcile to himself all things... making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20).

Creation and redemption meet in Christ. The One through whom creation came into being is also the One through whom God accomplishes reconciliation.

Redemption, then, is not an emergency plan God devised only after humanity sinned. Scripture places God's redemptive purpose in Christ before the foundation of the world. But we aren't going to try to unpack all of that yet. We have an entire biblical story ahead of us in which to watch that purpose unfold.

For now, stand for a moment at the edge of Genesis and consider the God we are about to encounter.

Before creation, God was God.

Before the first mountain rose, God was there. Before the first star burned, God was there.

Before the first human being drew breath, God was there.

He needed nothing. He lacked nothing. No one created Him. No one taught Him. No one counseled Him. He does not grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. Father, Son, and Spirit already were. And everything that is about to come into existence will owe its existence to Him.

Isaiah asks, "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One" (Isaiah 40:25).

THERE IS NO ONE!

This is the God whose story we are about to enter.

And that's important to remember before we read another word, because it changes the way we approach everything that follows. Abraham's story isn't ultimately about Abraham. Moses' story isn't ultimately about Moses. David's story isn't ultimately about David. And the Bible isn't ultimately about us.

We are part of the story.

But this is HIS story.

And then...

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”(Genesis 1:1)

What Does This Reveal About God?

God is eternal. Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:28

God is self-existent and self-sufficient. Exodus 3:14; Acts 17:24–25

God is incomparable. Isaiah 40:18, 25, 28

God is eternally relational as Father, Son, and Spirit. John 1:1–3; John 17:5, 24; Hebrews 9:14

God created purposefully, not out of need. Isaiah 43:7; Acts 17:24–28

God's eternal redemptive purpose centers in Christ. Ephesians 1:9–10; 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:20; Colossians 1:15–20

In the next blog, we'll step back and look at the biblical story from high above, taking in the broad landscape from creation to new creation without focusing on all the individual details yet. Think of it as an aerial, 30,000-foot view of the story God has given us in Scripture from Genesis 1 all the way to Revelation 22.

Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation

A Deeper Look

Day 1 | Psalm 90:1–12

1. How does Moses contrast God's eternal existence with the temporary nature of human life?
2. What words or phrases in this passage emphasize that God existed before creation?
3. How should seeing God from this perspective change the way you view your own life?

Day 2 | Isaiah 40:12–14, 18–31

1. Make a list of everything this passage reveals about God's greatness, wisdom, power, and endurance.
2. What questions does Isaiah ask to emphasize that no one can compare with God or serve as His counselor?
3. Why is the description of God as the everlasting Creator important to the picture Isaiah gives us?
4. Which truth about God in this passage leaves you with the greatest sense of awe, and why?

Day 3 | John 1:1–3, 14; 17:1–5, 20–26; Hebrews 9:14

1. What does John 1 reveal about the Word's existence before creation and His role in creation?
2. How does John 1:14 help us identify the Word as the One who came into the world as Jesus Christ?
3. What do Jesus' words in John 17 reveal about His glory and relationship with the Father before the world existed?
4. What do these passages reveal about Father, Son, and Spirit before creation?

Day 4 | Acts 17:22–28; Isaiah 43:7

1. List what these passages say God gives and what humanity receives.
2. According to Acts 17:24–25, what does God not need from us?
3. What do these passages reveal about why God created and about humanity's dependence upon Him?
4. How does this challenge the idea that God created because something was lacking in Him?

Day 5 | Ephesians 1:3–10; 3:7–12; Colossians 1:15–20

1. Look for words and phrases related to God's purpose, plan, will, and timing.
2. What place does Christ have in God's eternal purpose?
3. According to Colossians 1:15–20, what is Christ's relationship to creation and to reconciliation?
4. After this week's study, how does the statement “This is HIS story” change the way you approach Scripture?