Peace and love and the joy of the Lord be with you.

*Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*

 John 17:5

Jesus has just about finished the work that God the Father had given Him to do. He knew He was about to return to the Father and regain His position in Heaven along with His Father. This is the position Jesus had given up in order to come to earth and die for us.

Each of us also has work to do. Now our work can certainly never be compared with the redemptive work of Christ. Still, God has laid out things for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that God had planned out, before the beginning of time, works for us to accomplish.

Once our time is done here, we who believe on Christ get to experience His glory in heaven. Hopefully, we will have accomplished the work God had for us to do.

The Bible is full of general things for us to do that are pleasing to God. If we focus on these, we will do the works God has planned for us. Also, if that special work comes along, we will be ready, practiced in doing God’s will.

In Christ’s love

John

 10-31-21

Genesis 1:1

*In the beginning God* …

As we launch into a study of the book of Genesis, the first part of the first sentence, gives us two deep things to consider. We can start with “*In the beginning*”, and have a fairly complete discussion. But then we need to consider “*God*”; of course, with God we will only be able to scratch the surface.

“*In the beginning*” here refers to the beginning of time; the beginning of the existence of God’s creation. The important thing to understand is that God existed before the beginning. God existed, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in complete perfection and love. We know God existed this way because the Bible teaches us that God exists as the Trinity now. The Bible also teaches that God is unchanging. Malachi 3:6 tells us, “*For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed*.” Because God is unchanging and He is the Trinity now, He was the Trinity before the beginning.

He didn’t need anything else. This is what we read in Acts 17:24-25. *The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things.*

God chose for there to be a beginning. He decided to create so the concept of time began. This is the beginning in Genesis 1:1. There is something very important about the Hebrew word used here for beginning. It means the beginning in relation to the end.

We can think of the beginning as the first in a series. We start with step one, which is the beginning, with the idea of moving to step two, and so on. That is not what the word means here.

The word used here indicates a beginning followed by an undetermined amount of time which comes to an end. As usual with God’s word, there are several different levels to this. It looks to the end of the book of Genesis. In Chapter 49 verse 1, Israel gathers his twelve sons around him for his final message to them. *Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come*.”

The phrase “*days to come*” literally means “end of days”. “*In the beginning*” is followed by all the history up until the end of Jacob’s life. God began everything knowing that He would bring His chosen people to a place where they could multiply into a great nation; the place was Egypt. The end of Genesis brings the people to something new: Life after Egypt.

Likewise, the same type of thing takes place at the end of Deuteronomy with Moses. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch, under the direction of God. “*In the beginning*” at the start of Genesis was already looking to the end of the Pentateuch. The end of Moses’ writings in Deuteronomy comes with chapter 31:28-29, ‘*Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands*.”’

Moses called together all the elders of Israel just as Jacob had called together his twelve sons. We again see the idea of ‘days to come’ or ‘end of days’ when Moses tells them that evil will befall them in the “*latter days*”. This is the end of the Pentateuch and the end of their wandering in the desert; something new is about to happen; they are about the enter the Promised Land.

Perhaps you can already see what’s coming. God already knew when He made this creation that it would come to an end. History will stop; things in this life will not continue like this forever. Those words in Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning*”, were written in anticipation of the end we see in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation gives us an account of the final reign of evil on the earth, the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom, and the final judgement and abolishing of all evil.

But there is also something new. Revelation 21:1, “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea*.” This is what “*In the beginning*” has anticipated. It was the start, followed by an unknown period of time, and ending with the creation of a new earth for us to live in.

In the Garden of Eden, the people could be with God and talk with Him. But the new creation will be better. We will have been made perfect by God’s sanctification and there will be a deeper connection than was possible in the Garden. Christ is in us as we are in Him; we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. This is a fellowship that wouldn’t have been possible if we hadn’t lived the life we are living now; if we hadn’t dealt with existing in fallen creation. God began things with a view to the end; with a view to making all things new and making all things better.

Our consideration of “*In the beginning*” has also served as an introduction to God; the God of the Bible. We get a glimpse of the enormous complexity of the true God. The time from God dictating Genesis to Moses to when the apostle John was shown the Revelation was about 1500 years. We don’t know how long it was from creation to Moses and it has been about 2000 years since John wrote. This is a huge amount of time that God already had worked out; worked out to subatomic detail.

We can’t comprehend our God; He is truly infinite. This is a good thing; if God were comprehendible, He wouldn’t really be God. Nevertheless, God does want us to know some things about Him. He wants to reveal; He wants us to know He is and for us to believe in Him.

When God created us, He built into us a sense that He exists. Deep inside we know that there is a God. In Romans 1:21, Paul is referring to Gentile unbelievers when he says, “*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened*.” Paul is saying that the people knew God existed but they refused to acknowledge it; in their fallen state they didn’t want to believe in God. They also suffer the consequences of not believing.

We often use the analogy that we have a God-shaped hole inside us. Unfortunately, our tendency is to try to fill that hole with something else. We may try to stuff the hole with money, or drugs, or work, or family; but these things never fit; only God will satisfy the missing part of our life.

Another way God is revealed is in creation. Paul is very clear in Romans 1:20, “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse*.” It is obvious by looking at creation that God exists; He is the only explanation of how all the universe could be.

Mankind clings to evolutionary theory and the big bang due to rebelliousness against God and the subsequent darkening of their heart. This is a demonstration of futile speculations and foolishness.

A built-in knowledge that God exists and what we see in nature is what is called ‘general revelation’. General revelation is there for everyone. Anyone who chooses to can use what is available and realize that God is real and believe in Him. Notice that general revelation is not a revelation that saves. A person can come to realize that one God exists and that He created all things. A person can even believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But this is not enough for salvation.

God has chosen to give what we call ‘special revelation’. Special revelation is what we read in the Bible. In the Bible we learn of some of the attributes of God. And very importantly, we learn about Jesus Christ, by whom we are saved.

The Bible tells us a lot about God. The Bible tells us certain things that have happened or that are going to happen; but it also leaves a lot out. As we study Genesis, we learn that a primary part of God’s revelation to us is His plan of redemption. That’s what He wants us to know. We will look into this more in the future, but just keep it in the back of your mind.

God is the focus; “*In the beginning God*”. God comes up time and again in Genesis and throughout the Bible. God wanted to create and He did. Furthermore, His desire was good and wise. God operates in wisdom; He is never foolish or does things on a whim. Everything He created was good. God will not tolerate evil forever. He will let it be for a time because of His great mercy and love, but because of His justice He cannot simply let it go. Sin and evil must be punished.

As we mentioned earlier, God doesn’t need anyone or anything else. No-one had to give Him anything or help Him along. God was not created and He didn’t just suddenly appear. God has always existed and He has life in Himself. All creation that has life was given life; and it was given life by God. Again, God is far above us.

It is good for us to think about God; about who He is and what He is like. When we consider Him; when we think about His power and infinite abilities, it puts us in a proper state of awe. The Bible reminds us to fear Him. Yes, this fear has the idea of reverence and deep respect. This is a proper fear to have of God. But there also needs to be a healthy dose of being scared of Him. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, “*Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*.”

God is truly all-powerful and there is no-one above Him; He answers to no higher power. He can and He will cast those into hell that refuse His generous offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. In this country especially, there is a general lack of respect for authority. I believe it is a spiritual condition; a principality that is over this country; and it affects Christians as well as nonbelievers. We might get by with that here, but not in Christ’s Kingdom. And although His Kingdom is not yet consummated, it is here and we live in it. Fear God, that is the beginning of wisdom; that is the key to accepting God’s gift of salvation in Christ.

When we dwell on God, it builds our sense of wonder that we have access to His throne. We can come to Him in prayer and the Creator and Ruler of the universe will give us His attention. Considering these things will help us come to Him in respect and gratitude. How else should we approach Him?

God is good and He is merciful and He is kind and He desires to forgive. He is love and He loves us such that He allowed His Son to suffer the consequences of our sin in our place; in this way, He can be with us in fellowship forever. In the face of this kind of love and mercy, it becomes our tendency to take it for granted; to take God for granted. By dwelling on who He is and His power and justice, it will help us to approach Him in humility and gratitude.

God is all-knowing; He instituted the beginning knowing that there would be an end. In other words, God has a plan and He is carrying it out. He has not been surprised by anything that has happened; He knew everything each of us was going to do from before the beginning.

And here is comfort for us: He knew what was coming and He had a plan; and that plan included redemption for a rebellious ungrateful people: us.

Prayer

Thank You Lord God, that we can come before You in worship and in prayer. It is amazing to consider that You not only hear what we say, but that You desire to give us our requests. Again, it is comforting to know, that You know what is best and will even withhold the desires of our heart if it will separate us from You.

How important for us to come into closer communion with You; to conform to Your likeness; to be more like our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. How blessed are You who gives us the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit to make these things happen. Without Him, our efforts are useless; with Him, we are sanctified.

You know the beginning from the end. You have graciously revealed to all Your creation that You are and that You are powerful God. You have also reveled to Your undeserving creation the way of redemption. You have established a finite amount of time for the acceptance of Jesus and then You will bring about the end; with judgement; and with new creation. Help us Lord to spread the seed of the Gospel that You may be glorified with a great harvest.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen