

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"

In the beginning

Patristic Commentaries

- **St. Augustine**

- "But even if we believe that God made heaven and earth at the beginning of time, we should certainly realize that there was no time before the beginning of time. For God also made time, and thus there was no time before he made time. Hence, we cannot say that there was a time when God had not yet made anything. For how could there be a time that God had not made since he is the maker of all time? And if time began to be with heaven and earth, there cannot be found a time when God had not yet made heaven and earth. When they say, "Why did He suddenly decide?" they speak as if some time passed during which God produced nothing. But a time could not pass that God had not already made, because he cannot be the producer of time unless he is before time."

- **Origen**

- Origen claims that "in the beginning" is not speaking about a time period, but rather speaking about Christ Himself - "In the Savior, God created the heavens and the earth."

Conclusions

- **When did God create the heavens and the earth?**

- This part is the most difficult to understand, in my opinion. Because for us, we always have something before the beginning. Before church today I had... school! And before school today I was at home getting ready. And before my day started - before the beginning of my day I had... the end of yesterday! And before that was the day before! And before that was last week and last month and last year! Until the day I was born. But what was before I was born? My parents got married... and before that, their parents. And all my ancestors up to Adam and Eve... but what

about before that? Well before that God created Adam... and before that God created the land and the animals and the plants. And before that God created the planets and stars. And before that God created light. And before that God created the heavens and the earth. But what about before that? Well... that was the beginning! In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- It doesn't say that God was created, or where God comes from. Even at the beginning, God already existed! Many people will ask "well who created God?" or "Where did God come from?" or "What was before God?" - the problem with these questions is they are rooted in a human understanding of time. For us, we think of everything in the context of time - past, present, future. But God lives outside of time - God created time. God can touch the past, present and future.
- Imagine like when we watch a movie. We can play, rewind or fast-forward a video or a movie. We can even "touch it" by editing. We have in front of us the whole timeline of the movie, and no matter what the movie does, we are still in the same place. When I rewind the movie I am not rewinding my life with it! I live outside of it. The same with God. He sees the universe like a timeline. This is what it means that God lives outside of time. So this is the first question answered. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This tells us that God already existed in the beginning. That God is the one that created time itself. God is eternal - meaning no beginning and no end
- St. Paul witnesses to this fact in his epistle to Titus when he says: "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..." (Titus 1:2)

God

Word Study

- מִיְהוָה
 - Elohim is the word used for "God" in this verse. It is plural (-im suffix like cherubim or seraphim) whereas the verb for "created" is singular
 - This is the first indication in Scripture of the Holy Trinity Who is Three in One and One in Three

Scripture interprets Scripture

- The Person of the Father in Creation
- The Person of the Son in Creation
 - Proverbs 8:22-9:5
 - "Before His works of old" - "before there was ever an earth" - "Or the primal dust of the world" - "When He prepared the heavens, I was there" - "a master craftsman" - "Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed"
 - These words refer to Christ, and it becomes abundantly clear with the last phrase of the passage

- So this shows from elsewhere in the Scripture that God the Word is present and active in the work of Creation
- John 1:1-3
 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."
- John 5:17
 - The Pharisees were questioning the Lord Jesus on His performing of miracles on the Sabbath. "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'"
 - What is the Sabbath? The 7th day – Saturday. What did God do on the 7th day? What did God do on the Sabbath day? He rested... Rest is kind of passive... what did God DO on the seventh day? "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:3) – so if Christ is saying "I'm continuing this work with my Father on the Sabbath day" then what does that mean?
- Colossians 1:15-18
 - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And HE is before all things, and in Him all things consist.** And He is the head of the body, the church, who is in the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."
 - We also remember this part from the Liturgy of St. Basil: "who has created the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is therein, the Father of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ by Whom You have created all things visible and invisible Who is seated upon the Throne of His glory and Who is worshipped by all the Holy Powers"
- Hebrews 1:1-2
 - "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoke to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the worlds**" Hebrews 1:1-2
- John 8:25
 - "Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?' And Jesus said to them, '**Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.**'" (John 8:25)
 - The Fathers all mention this statement but with a slightly different translation of "I am the beginning, I who speak with you."
- Revelation 1:8
 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the Beginning** and the End" (Rev. 1:8)
- The Person of the Holy Spirit in Creation
 - Genesis 1:2
 - "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."
- Characteristics of God evident in Creation
 - "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead"

(Romans 1:20)

- **God is love:** He prepared everything for man first before creating him
- **God is wisdom:** He brought order out of chaos, created everything in varieties, but in harmony.
- **God is eternal:** We already talked about God existence before time began
- **God is omnipotent:** All-might and all powerful, created everything from nothing
- **God is free:** He created a new order of things that didn't exist before
- **God is infinite:** He exists beyond all limitations of time and space

Patristic Commentaries

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

- "For all things are from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit." (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1.5)

Apologetical Arguments

- First Cause Argument
 - Everything that begins to exist must have a cause
 - The universe began to exist
 - Therefore, the universe must have a cause
- Design Argument
 - Universe shows evidence of intelligent design
 - Living things show evidence of intelligent design
 - There must be a designer
- Moral Argument
 - Humanity has an inherent sense of "right" and "wrong"
 - Morality is absolute and not relative
 - Since there is a law, there must be a lawgiver

Conclusions

- **Who is He that created the heavens and the earth in the beginning?**
 - The fact of the matter is that all three Persons of the Trinity play a role in the work of Creation

Created

Patristic Commentaries

- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

- "But if someone should ask how this is possible, he should hear from us well this wise and excellent saying: 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been

his counselor?’ (Isaiah 40:13, Romans 11:34) For if one wishes to inquire into these things, there is no doubt that he will be completely lacking in mental ability, in contrast to that [the mind] which God is perceived to have. That our faculties are insignificant or as absolutely nothing in comparison with God, he himself clearly states: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways’, says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts.’ (Isaiah 55:8-9) Let it be allowed, then, that extraordinariness and incomprehensibility are the touchstone concerning these things. For God creates as he himself knows how and as only he is able.” (Glaphyra 1)

- **St. John Chrysostom**

- “Notice how the Divine Nature shines out of the very manner of creation, how He executes His creation in a way contrary to human procedures, first stretching out the heavens then laying out the earth beneath, first the roof and then the foundation. Who has ever seen the like? Who has ever heard of it? No matter what human beings produce, this could never have happened - whereas when God decides, everything yields to His will and becomes possible.” (Homily 2 on Genesis)
- “We began, remember, at the opening of the book of Genesis on the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” and dealt completely with all its contents, without however being able to grasp it fully.” (Homily 3 on Genesis)

Conclusions

- **How did God create the heavens and the earth in the beginning?**

- Creation is incomprehensible for us because everything that we create comes from the earth... but God made the earth:
 - A house is made of bricks which are from mud which is from the earth.
 - A computer is made from fiberglass and copper: copper is from the earth, fiberglass is plastic and glass: glass is from sand from the earth, plastic is from carbon and hydrogen from the earth
- Creation is incomprehensible for us because God works in different ways... He fashions the roof before He fashions the foundation

The heavens and the earth

Patristic Commentaries

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Conclusions

- **What did God create in the beginning?**

- God's creation involved the invisible and the visible.
 - The heavens represent the invisible, the earth represents the visible (remember Colossians 1:15-18)

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