

# Christmas 2022

## Sermon #1: In the Beginning

Genesis 1:1-4, 26-27

Kevin Maurice ---- November 27, 2022

Once upon a time ...

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away ...

The very first words of a captivating story immediately arrest your attention. They set the stage. They tell you of the adventure to come, and ultimately, they draw you into that adventure. Effective first words incite you to want to know more about what the author has to say. And they tell us why we should care about the story.

This morning we're going to study the very first words ever put into the universe. We're going to study the most important first words ever put on paper. And these words not only set the stage, they unveil what's behind the stage. They reveal the author of the story Himself.

So, please turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 1. We're going to immerse ourselves in the very first words of the Bible today. Would you actually stand, and let's read Genesis 1 together:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness ...

<sup>26</sup> The God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Please be seated.

Genesis 1, the awe-inspiring, the wonderous, the first words of the Bible. They tell us about the creation of the universe. They tell us about the creation of our world. They tell us what it means to be human. And this one chapter actually gives us a foundation for belief in our Creator.

Today we're going to study and we're going to see that God created, why He created, and why He created us. And as we do this, we're going to study three arguments for the existence of God—three reasonable arguments for belief in a Creator God.

I'm really excited. We're going to have some fun today. Here we go ...

### **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**

What does it mean that God created? The Bible tells us that in the beginning, in the very beginning, there was nothing. And then God created everything.

This is almost exclusively distinct in creation stories from any other religion or culture around the globe. Because most creation accounts, legends, myths, stories, detail some kind of deity or group of deities creating the universe, creating the world, out of something.

The ancient Babylonians believed that the universe was born from the blood of one of their slain gods. The creation myth of Japan holds that one of the gods dipped his sword into the ocean, and when he withdrew it, the four drops that fell back to earth formed the islands of Japan. In Hinduism there's the myth of the world turtle, this cosmic turtle that bears creation upon its shell, much like Atlas in Greek mythology. But beyond the turtle—who knows what else is out there?

The Bible, though, offers something wholly unique. Because very clearly Scripture tells us that God was the in the beginning. Everything starts with one God who creates by Himself out of nothing. Genesis says the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters, over this deep, vast void that is formless and empty. And this isn't the ocean—God hasn't created that yet. That comes later in verse 6. But what we have here is God Himself over and above this deep, endless expanse of nothing. And He creates something out of nothing. He makes the universe.

## The Cosmological Argument for God's Existence

**In the beginning, God created ...** five words. And these first words of the Bible are actually one of the most compelling and reasonable arguments for the existence of God. Let me just show you. In the beginning, God created ... in a nutshell this is what is called the cosmological argument for the existence of a creator. The cosmological argument is a three-step chain of logic that goes from A to B to C. And if A is true, and B is true, then C must be true.

The first step in the chain goes like this: **1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.** Whatever exists has a beginning, meaning something caused it to be. Everything has an origin. Matter doesn't just materialize—Poof!—out of thin air. Matter must be made. Makes sense, right?

Here's step number two: **2) The universe began to exist.** Whatever begins to exist has a cause. The universe began to exist. Now to us living in the twenty-first century, that's not groundbreaking. We nod our heads and say, "Yep. I learned that in school. I got it." But for most of human history, the prevailing belief was that the universe was always here. It always existed, it was always around.

But what we know—what we're starting to actually be able to see and photograph with tools like the Hubble or the Webb telescopes is the startling truth that the universe has not always been around. It hasn't always been around. And we're able to actually see echoes and remnants of the beginning.



There was a point, there was a discernible moment in space and time when all of this started—when existence came to exist. God said, “Let there be light.” A burst of light, an explosion of energy, and everything began. There was nothing, and then, boom!—there was.

So let’s hold these two things to be true: whatever begins to exist has a cause, and the universe began to exist. And if one is true and two is true, then what follows?

**3) The universe has a cause.** And yes, science tells us this. It’s also straight from Genesis chapter 1. The universe began to exist, therefore the universe and everything in it has a cause. Something—and as believers, we would say someone—caused it. If there were a variety of causes, if there were five or six or seven thousand, logic dictates that there had to have been a preliminary one, the one that sparked everything else.

St. Thomas Aquinas, using this argument, called God the first cause or the unmoved mover. In the beginning, there was nothing, except for God Himself. And then He created. That’s the cosmological argument.

Now if we only had Genesis 1:1 we could all walk away and be deists and believe in a higher power who was distant and impersonal. We could see the universe as this cosmic clock constructed by a Creator who chose to walk away.

And so, thank God that we have more to the story than that. In the beginning, God created. Now let’s ask why. Why would He do all of this? What is the reason for God’s creation?



What's the reason for existence? The purpose of creation is this: it is for His glory. Creation exists to glorify God.

Turn with me again to Genesis 1. **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.**

Creation unfolds from this point, and on each consecutive day God creates, and then He calls His creation good. He makes this objective statement about the nature of what He creates. And the things that He makes are good because they're His. The things that God creates are good—not on their own, but because they're His creation, because they glorify Him.

And right from the beginning, you can see that God has a plan to all of this, separating light and darkness. That's not random. God chooses to do this. He knows what he's doing. He has a plan, and that plan show off His power and His purpose, and it glorifies Him. Creation glorifies God.

The Book of Romans tells us what can be known about God, the things that He allows us to know about Him, are clearly seen in the things that He has made, the things that He has created.

### **The Teleological or Design Argument for God's Existence**

And God's plan and His purposefulness in that plan bring us to a second logical reason to believe in Him. It's called the teleological or the design argument. Teleological is just a fancy way of saying this—what is the purpose of something? The more common name is the argument from design. And it goes like this. Because there are a multitude of factors and forces in our universe and on our planet that not only have to co-occur and coexist, but they have to collaborate for there to be human life. The only realistic way for this to have happened is for there to have been a design. And the greater the complexity of that design, the more significant evidence we have of a plan.

Have you ever heard of a Rube Goldberg device? It's a machine or a series of different machines with all these components that have to work together to complete a specific, often

mundane, task. And all these pieces function together perfectly, or in the end it doesn't work at all. Here's, let me just show you what it looks like.

### Video of Rube Goldberg device

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOMIBdM6N7Q>

That's pretty cool, right? That's an example of complexity in design. If just one of those parts doesn't work—if that hamster is still sleeping, that page doesn't turn. No matter how big or how small, each component is absolutely necessary.

So, let's just ask the question, do we think those items arranged themselves at random? Did those pool balls situate themselves to fall? Did that camp stove place itself under that beaker? Did all of that happen by chance? No, no way. Someone—probably the guy in the video—put all of it in place. And he was meticulous. He designed it, he had this plan, and he created it. Items don't just form together to make a machine.

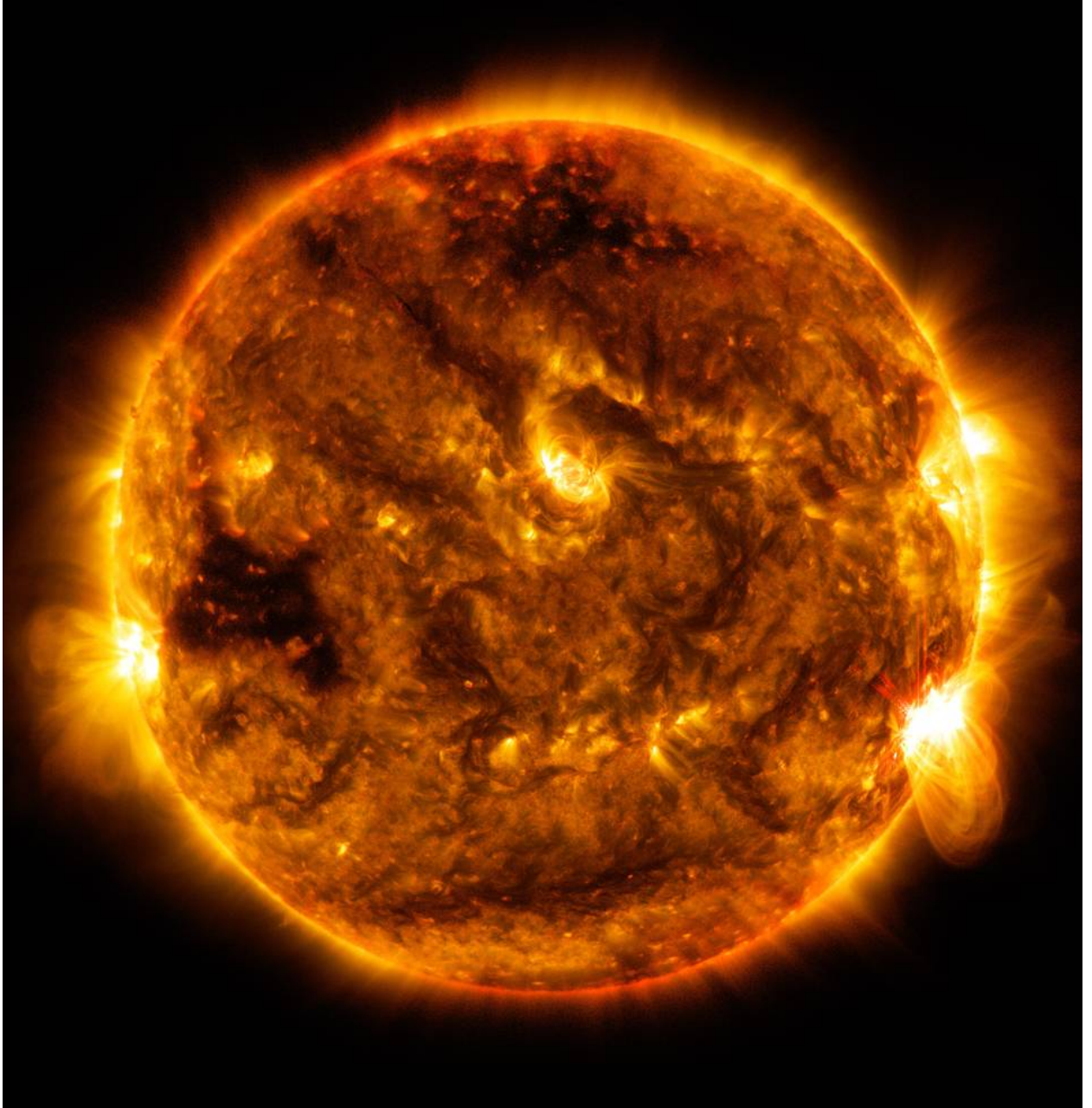
And neither does our planet. Because there are so many intricate mechanisms that all have to work together just for us to exist, just for us to be here. And you can either say, *Yeah, but it all happened by chance*. Or you can look for and start to see the design.

So, let's just take a moment and look at this place that we call home.



Planet Earth, spoken into existence, is fascinating. It's so cool. Our planet is moving through space at a speed of 67,000 miles per hour. And the same time, we're also rotating on our axis at 1,000 miles per hour. And we're traveling around this massive ball of flaming gas that we call the sun. The sun is an energy machine. It creates energy at a rate of four million tons per second, and that energy provides the earth with 99 percent of the total energy that we need. We get light and heat and vitamin D, apparently, and all kinds of other stuff we need from the sun's energy.





And the sun is doing all of that at a distance of 93 million miles. The sun is 93 million miles away. Now, here's the astounding part. This number, 93 million miles, is perfect. Because if we were 92 million miles away from the sun, there would be no life on planet Earth. The planet would be far too hot. Everything would be on fire. If we were 94 million miles away from the sun there would be no life on planet Earth. Everything would be frozen. Scientists have nicknamed this zone of 93 million miles "the Goldilocks Zone," because it's not too hot, it's not

too cold, it's just right. It's like somebody turned the AC to the perfect setting. (I'll let you disagree with your spouse on what that is when you get home.)

Here's something else that's unique about the planet Earth. Of all the planets in our solar system, the Earth has this distinct tilt. We're a little off-kilter, and it's not just because of the people from College Station. Have you ever wondered why your globe has an odd slant to it? It's because the Earth tilts at an angle of 23.5 degrees. It's a really good thing that it does that. Because if the Earth didn't have any tilt, we would become what's called "tidally locked." And you can see evidence of planets like this around the solar system. What would happen is that one side would get all the sun, which would mean no life on planet Earth. The other side would get no sun at all, no light at all, which would mean no life on planet Earth. And guess what? This angle of 23.5 degrees is perfect for a planet to both tilt and rotate so that each side gets an equal amount of sunlight and energy. A 24.5 degree tilt and there's no life on planet Earth. A 22.5 degree tilt and there's no life on planet Earth.

And do you want to know preserves this 23.5 angle? There's an object that helps to stabilize our planet. We call it the moon. It's not just a Christmas ornament floating out in space. The moon exerts gravitational force upon the Earth—our tilt, the tides, the water on the planet's surface, the overall stability and climate zones, the rotational speed of our planet---all results from the moon. And without that gravitational force, we are not here. No moon--- no life on planet Earth.



Finally, let's consider the air that we breathe, each and every second of every day. Let's do this together—deep breath in ... and breathe out ... ooh, that's nice. I kind of like that. For us to be able to take that breath, the hydrogen that's in our air must convert one-seven-thousandth of itself to helium. Hydrogen must convert .007% of itself into helium for life to exist. And guess what? That .007% of helium in our air doesn't just make our voice squeak—there's actually no life on planet earth without it. If it's .006% there's no life on planet Earth. I know what you're saying—we don't breathe helium, we breathe oxygen, and you're right. And our atmosphere is 21% oxygen and you probably know where this is going—22% oxygen—say it with me now—there's no life on planet Earth. If there's 20% oxygen in the air, just one degree off, one percentage point, there's no life on planet Earth.

And what is so astonishing about our planet is that there is a myriad of these unbelievably precise numbers that all have to add up, and they have to work together just for there to be life. And if you look at our planet, it's as if somebody has all of these dials and they're all adjusted to just the right number so that we could be here.



And it's not just that some of them are adjusted—they're all fine-tuned, every single one of them. And the haunting truth is this, that even if 99% of them were all perfect, but just one was off, there would be no life. We would not exist. That's the teleological argument, the design argument.

And the design of creation testifies to God's glory. The design of creation glorifies God. We're reminded of this throughout the Bible.

Psalm 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky above proclaims His handiwork.

Isaiah 43:7 – God says: Everyone who is called by my name, whom I have created for my glory, I formed and made.

Romans 11:36 – Everything comes from Him and exists by His power and is intended for His glory.

All that fine-tuning, every piece of His plan fits together because creation exists for Him. It all exists for Him.

And these things that we might take for granted or just find commonplace—breathing each and every day—the regularity of a sunrise and a sunset—the timetable of the moon on its schedule—all of this regularity and order in creation is not boring. It's not mechanical. It's a billboard to God's glory.

The British author G. K. Chesterton said this about God and His glory and His enjoyment of His creation. This is a little bit of a longer quote, so forgive me, but it's so good. He wrote:

**“Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, ‘Do it again’; and the grown-up does it again until they're nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It's possible that God says every morning, ‘Do it again’ to the Sun; and every evening, ‘Do it again’ to the Moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never gotten tired of making them.”**

God created for His glory, and He says His creation is good. He enjoys it. And every galaxy out in space, all of the planets in our solar system, every plant that pops through the soil, every animal on land, every fish in the sea, every bird in the air—all of that was sufficient to glorify their Creator. But God chose to create something else. He chose us. He created us.

And He created out of and for His love.

Toward the end of Genesis 1 you see this. God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

God created for His glory and for His love. Now make no mistake, God did not create us because He was needy or lonely. God was already in eternal community. The Trinity is on display in Genesis chapter 1. God says, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.” And He’s not talking to angels, because angels are not in the image of God. He’s talking to himself, but not in the way you and I would talk to ourselves. God the Father is speaking with and to the Spirit. Remember, the Spirit of God is there. It’s hovering over the face of the waters. And God the Father is speaking with and to and ultimately through God the Son. We’re going to study that next Sunday. They’re all together there in the beginning.

The point is that God was already in relationship before He created human beings. He was eternally existing, sharing in the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And it’s out of that love that He created us. We’re in His image.

### **Argument from Desire**

And because we’re in the image of God, we will only ever find our truest love in Him. This brings us to a third argument for the existence of a Creator God. We’ll call this the argument from desire, and it goes like this.

Just as God designed so that all of these dials were tuned to their proper setting, in the same way, God created the human heart, our soul. It’s designed so that the only proper alignment, the only way that real and true and actual life can exist is with God Himself at the core, at the very center.

God created us in His image. We’re made out of and for His love. And that has a unique consequence. It’s called freedom. God freely chose to make us, and to make us in His image. And so, we’re also able to freely choose. He did this on purpose. He didn’t make us to be cactus; He made us to be children. God choosing to love us means that, ultimately, we also get to choose whether or not to love Him. And if we choose not to, if God is not the source of and the center of

your love, if He's not in the right place, you'll always feel like there's something more that you can't quite put your finger on, and it will be this ever elusive, always around the next corner kind of thing.

Life will feel like that magic eye puzzle that you could never quite get right. You couldn't see what it was all about. Life won't make sense. People and places and things, the very best that the world can offer, ultimately, will really only ever irritate this unique itch. There's got to be something more, because those things are just a hint of what you were really made for.

It's why King Solomon said that God has etched eternity in the human heart; or why Blaise Pascal wrote about a God-sized hole in every human soul that we try to fill with romantic love or money or fame or affection from others. St. Augustine knew this to be true. He wrote, **“You created me for yourself, O Lord, and my heart is restless until it finds its rest in You.”**

C. S. Lewis, who was perhaps the greatest articulator of this argument from design, said it this way: **“If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”**

God created you for the world of His love. Our desire for something more, for someone more, points us to this truth that He exists.

Now what does this mean? What does it mean that God created, He created for His glory and His love? What does that mean for us? For one thing, it means that you are not an accident. It means that you're here on purpose. You weren't mass produced. You exist for a reason. You were deliberately planned, you were intricately designed, and you were lovingly placed on this planet by the Creator.

And you were made for the world of His love. And because you're in the image of God, you'll never find your place in life until you find your place in Him.

Listen, the point of Genesis 1 is that God created the world and He chooses to offer us a relationship with Him. Find your place in Him. Get to know God—not as this cosmic clockmaker who left creation to its own devices; not as someone you turn to only when you really need it. Get to know the Creator who made and who loves you.

Pick up your Bible and spend time with God in His Word. If you don't know where to start, start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start. Read Genesis 1 and just read it slowly. Just meditate on it. Memorize it.

If you finish there, go to John 1 and read it and meditate on it and memorize it. You could do this. Take three minutes each day and just breathe in and breathe out. And as you do that, just contemplate the miracle of your existence on this planet, and just thank God for His glorious design. Take some time today, take time each day, and just pray. You can close your eyes or you can look up at the sky, and just pray and thank God—*Thank You for creating me, for loving me.*

The wonder of creation is this. None of us should be here. But God wanted us to be, so He spoke and He created and He wrote us into the story.

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.** The very first words of the Bible are more than just a prologue or an introduction to the Book of Genesis. These words open our understanding to life itself, and they draw us into an adventure of life with God.

God created. He created you. You are made for His glory and for His love. So get to know Him. Trust Him. Turn your life over to Him and see what kind of story He can create.

Would you please pray with me?

*Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe. Thank You for creating us and loving us. God, we pray that as we walk through life, we would see Your hand in everything and on everything; God, that we would see Your purpose in our lives.*

*God, thank You for choosing us. Thank You for choosing to create us and to love us. And thank You for sending Your Son, so that we could have a relationship with You.*

*God, we pray that as we enter this Christmas season we'd keep our eyes on You; that we would remember the truth that You loved us enough to come to us. So, Father, we pray these things in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*