

## Before Time Began

### A Step Toward Understanding Eternity Past

#### Introduction:

#### Biblical expressions

- 1) Old Testament expressions—*“the foundation(s) of the earth”*
  - a) Latter Prophets
    - i) Isaiah 40:21 (Note the two parallels)
      - (1) Communication: *Do you not know? Have you not heard?*
      - (2) Creation: *Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?*
    - ii) Isaiah 51:13—*That you have forgotten Yahweh your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth, ...*
      - (1) Yahweh created Israel, as well as the universe.
    - iii) Zechariah 12:1—*The oracle of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Thus declares Yahweh who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,*
      - (1) Yahweh’s three aspects of creation impacts His dealings with Israel.
  - b) Writings
    - i) Job 38:4—*when I laid the foundation of the earth?*
      - (1) Humanity did not exist before creation. Therefore, humanity is totally dependent upon the Creator. The 70+ questions drive this home.
      - (2) Pastor John Gill (1697-1771) wrote: Where was Job then? In a state of nothingness, a mere nonentity:
      - (3) Cf. Job 15:7; Ps. 104:5; Prov. 30:4
    - ii) Psalm 90:2—*Before the mountains were born Or You brought forth the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*
      - (1) God has always existed, even before creation.
    - iii) Proverbs 8:29—*when He marked out the foundations of the earth;*
      - (1) God’s wisdom was demonstrated at creation.
- 2) New Testament expressions—*“before the world”, “from all eternity”*
  - a) Gospels
    - i) Before creation began
      - (1) John 17:5—*before the world was* [*pro kosmos eimi*]
        - (a) The Son shared glory with the Father before creation.
      - (2) John 17:24—*before the foundation of the world* [*pro katabole kosmos*]
        - (a) The Father loved [*agapao*] the Son before creation.
    - ii) Since/from the beginning of creation
      - (1) Matthew 13:35—*since the foundation of the world* [*apo katabole kosmos*] (quote from Ps. 78:2)
        - (a) The basis for Jesus speaking in parables.

- (2) Matthew 25:34—*since the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
  - (a) The kingdom that stands prepared [perfect passive] since creation
- (3) Luke 11:50—*from the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
  - (a) A long line of persecuting Godward people since creation.
- b) Letters
  - i) Before creation began
    - (1) Ephesians 1:4—*before the foundation of the world* [pro katabole kosmos]
      - (a) Believers were chosen [eklegomai] in Christ before creation.
    - (2) 1 Peter 1:20—*before the foundation of the world* [pro katabole kosmos]
      - (a) Christ was foreknown [proginosko] before creation
  - ii) Since/from the beginning of creation
    - (1) Hebrews 4:3—*from the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
      - (a) God's creative works were finished at creation. There is no more creation taking place, except the salvation of souls (2 Cor. 5:17).
    - (2) Hebrews 9:26—*since the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
      - (a) Jesus only suffered death once since creation.
  - iii) From all eternity
    - (1) 2 Tim. 1:9—*which was given to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity* [pro chronos aionios]
    - (2) Titus 1:2—*which the God who cannot lie promised from all eternity* [pro chronos aionios]
- c) Revelation
  - i) Revelation 13:8—*from the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
    - (1) Names of some people were written in the book of life before creation. These will believe in Christ for salvation.
  - ii) Revelation 17:8—*from the foundation of the world* [apo katabole kosmos]
    - (1) Names of some people were not written in the book of life before creation. These will believe in the Antichrist and not be saved.

## Theological considerations

We are indebted to Dr. Roland McCune (*A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, vol. 1) for the basic definitions of these attributes. See also MacArthur and Mayhue *Biblical Doctrine* (pp. 168-188).

□ These attributes exist even if there is no creation with which God could interact.

1) Relating to **the Trinity of God** (attributes of God's GREATNESS)

a) God's **Self-Existence** (Aseity)—the source or ground of God's existence is wholly in Himself.

i) Cf. Exod. 3:14; Ps. 33:11; 36:9; 115:3; Dan. 4:35; John 5:26; Rom. 11:33-36

b) God's **Infinity**—God is without outside limitations; only the self-imposed limits of His nature and will.

i) Cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 40:5; 71:15; 89:2; 147:5; Rom. 11:33

- c) God's **Perfection**—God is complete in Himself; He has total integrity as the divine being that He is.
    - i) Cf. Job 37:16; Ps. 18:30; 19:7; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 12:2
  - d) God's **Omnipotence**—God possesses exhaustive power, by which He can do all things consistent with His nature and purpose.
    - i) Cf. Gen. 17:1; Job 42:2; Is. 40:28; Jer. 32:17; Rev. 19:6
  - e) God's **Omniscience**—God's immediate, simultaneous and eternal knowledge of all things past, present and future, whether actual or possible.
    - i) Cf. Job 37:16; Ps. 33:13-15; Prov. 15:3; Acts 1:24; 15:18; 1 John 3:20;
  - f) God's **Omnipresence**—God is in the universe, everywhere present at the same time, filling every part of it with His whole being.
    - i) Cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:8-10; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:27
  - g) God's **Omnisapience**—God is all-wise. He has infinite wisdom. God applies His knowledge in such a way that the best means are employed to achieve the highest ends in order to glorify Himself the most.
    - i) Cf. Ps. 104:24; Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:10
  - h) God's **Eternality**—God's existence cannot be measured by time. The past, present, and future of God's existence are possessed by Him in one indivisible present. He has no before or afterward, no earlier or later. In fact, God transcends all temporal limitations and is without beginning or end. As such God is the author or cause of time.
    - i) Cf. Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Job. 26:26; Ps. 90:2; 93:2; 102:11-12; Is. 9:6; 40:28; Hab. 1:12; Rom. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 1:8; 4:8
  - i) God's **Impassibility**, Independence, Self-Sufficiency, and Immutability—God is changeless in His being and purposes. It also means that He is incapable of growth or decay in any respect.
    - i) Cf. Num. 23:19; Ps. 33:11; 89:33-37; Is. 43:12; 46:10; 54:10; Ezek. 24:14; Micah 7:18-20; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8; James 1:17
  - j) God's **Incomprehensibility**—God cannot be completely known by a finite mind. He is eternally incomprehensible to a created, finite mind.
    - i) Cf. Judg. 13:18; Ps. 139:6; 145:3; 147:5; Is. 9:6; 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; Eph. 3:19
- 2) Relating to **salvation and sanctification** (attributes of God's GOODNESS)
- These attributes exist even if there is no creation with which God could interact.
  - a) God's **Holiness**—God's holiness is specifically seen in two realms. First, it is seen in the idea of *apartness* from all that is created, a holiness of *majestic transcendence*. ... Second and most common is God's separation from all that is ethically unclean, a holiness of *moral purity*.
    - i) Cf. Ex. 15:11; Lev. 11:44; 1 Sam. 2:2; Ps. 99:5, 9; 6:1-5; Is. 57:15; Rev. 4:8
    - ii) Isaiah's favorite name for God is "the Holy One of Israel/Jacob." (@ 25x)
      - 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14-15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14

- b) God's **Truth**—God is, therefore, true in at least three theological senses. First, God is the true or genuine God in that He alone in His being, attributes, and activities conforms to all that God ought to be. ... Second, God is truthful in that His knowledge and declarations eternally conform to His being. He is the veracious God, knowing and representing things as they actually are. ... Third, God truthfulness has its foundation in His being and nature. As the self-contained, self-consistent Ontological Trinity, God is the source of all truth.
- i) The true God: Cf. 2 Chron. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 3:7; 6:10
  - ii) God is truthful: Cf. 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 19:9; John 17:17; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18
  - iii) God is the source of all truth: Cf. Ps. 31:5; John 3:33; 14:6; 1 John 5:6
- c) God's **Love**—That in God which moves Him to give Himself and His gifts spontaneously, voluntarily, righteously, and eternally, for the good of personal beings, regardless of their merit or response.
- i) Cf. Deut. 7:7-8; Isa. 63:9; Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; 14:23; 16:27; Acts 14:17; 1 John 4:8, 10
- d) God's **Righteousness** and **Justice**—*Righteousness in God*, then, is that perfection of His character or that aspect of His holiness in which His actions and attitudes are always in conformity with His own perfect being or nature and by which He demands absolute conformity to perfect right in others. ... *Justice in God* ... is that aspect of His holiness by which He rewards conformity and punishes non-conformity to His perfect standard of right.
- i) Righteousness: Cf. Deut. 32:4; Ps. 11:7; 89:14; 145:17; Rom. 3:21-25
  - ii) Justice: Cf. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 97:2; Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17
- e) God's **Faithfulness**—God's faithfulness is His trustworthiness to act or perform in accordance with His word, promises, or sayings.
- i) Cf. Deut. 7:8-10; Ps. 36:5; 89:1-2, 5, 8; 119:75, 90; 143:1; Lam. 3:22-23; 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 10:23; 1 John 1:9
- f) God's **Mercy**—God's mercy is His compassion, pity, kindness, tenderness, and gentleness toward miserable sinners.
- i) Cf. Neh. 9:17-21, 27-32; Ps. 145:9; Rom. 9:15-18; Eph. 2:4-8; 1 Tim. 1:13
- g) God's **Grace**—God's grace is His underserved, unearned, unrecompensed, and, for unbelievers, unwanted favor toward mankind.
- i) Cf. Rom. 3:23-24; 5:17, 20; 6:1; 2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9; 3:7-8; Titus 2:11-12; James 4:6
- 3) Things we know about eternity past.
- a) Within the Triunity of God: John 17:5, 24; 1 Pet. 1:20
    - i) The Son was eternally begotten by the Father—Matt. 21:37; Luke 20:13; John 1:1; 3:16-17; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:17; 1 John 4:9, 10, 14
      - (1) i.e. the Son was the Son before He was sent by the Father; the Father was the Father before He sent the Son.
      - (2) The Son was not eternally begotten by the Holy Spirit.

- ii) The Spirit eternally proceeded from the Father and the Son—John 15:26;  
Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19  
(1) Neither the Father nor the Son proceed from the Spirit.
- iii) Jesus and the Father shared eternal glory—John 17:5
- iv) The Father loved the Son with eternal love—John 17:24
- v) The Father freely chose the Son with eternal wisdom—1 Pet. 1:20
- b) Related to **salvation**: Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; Rev. 13:8;  
17:8
  - i) The Father hid certain spiritual truths from certain people—Matt. 13:35
  - ii) The Father prepared the Millennial kingdom for the heirs of the Father—  
Matt. 25:34
  - iii) The Father chose certain people in Christ to be holy and blameless before  
Him—Eph. 1:4
  - iv) The Father gave believers His own purpose and grace in Christ Jesus—2  
Tim. 1:9
  - v) The Father promised believers eternal life—Titus 1:2
  - vi) The Father completed His creation work—Heb. 4:3
  - vii) The Son could not suffer more than once since creation—Heb. 9:26
  - viii) The non-elect will worship the unholy-trinity during the Tribulation—  
Rev. 13:8; 17:8
- c) Related to **sanctification**: Job 38:4; Ps. 90:2; Prov. 8:29; Isaiah 40:21; 51:13;  
Zech. 12:1; Luke 11:50
  - i) Growth in our walk of faith demands humility—Job 38:4
  - ii) God is trustworthy in every generation because He is the eternal God—Ps.  
90:2
  - iii) Because God exercised infinite wisdom in creation, He can be trusted  
now—Prov. 8:29
  - iv) Because God is sovereign over all things, He can be trusted now—Is. 40:21
  - v) The fear of man causes us to forget God the creator—Is. 51:13
  - vi) God's sovereignty displayed at creation is also displayed in His care of  
Israel—Zech. 12:1 (cf. 1 Pet. 4:19)
  - vii) God's infinite wisdom displayed throughout human history will also be  
displayed in the time of judgment—Luke 11:50