

# PASTOR RAY'S BIBLE SCHOOL 201

## Session One

### “How to Get Started”

#### I. Before We Begin: “Got a Bible?” (Or “What’s that In Your Lap?”)

##### A. Five Fundamentals before We Start

1. The Bible is not information to be understood, it’s a “revelation” of God to be received.

a. God is a **Person**. But like any person, He can only be known if He chooses to **reveal** Himself. I can never truly know another person unless they are willing to give us “self-revelation”.

b. My relationship with any person is very superficial unless they choose to **speak** to me. It’s virtually impossible to really know, much less understand someone who will not tell you what they are thinking!

c. The Bible is about a God who **speaks**! It is God’s “Self-revelation” of Himself. To know the Bible is to know the Person, because the Person has “spoken” to us all about Who He is, what He is like and what He thinks about every imaginable subject.

d. We may like or dislike people on the basis of who they **say** they are, but we ought not to deny them their right to be **who** they are. Our judgment of a **person** is based on what we can learn of them as to what they believe, and who they say they are.

2. The Bible is a **story**, God’s story, or “HIS-Story”.

a. The Bible has a beginning, middle, and an end.

b. It not only has a “beginning” and an “end”, it actually tells us of events that pre-dated what we call the “beginning”, and reveals to us what eternity will be like when time is no more!

c. The Bible presupposes that God existed before time began, *before* the “in the beginning” in Genesis 1:1! The “self-existent” nature of God is referred to as “aseity”\*

**\*\*"Aseity" means that the basis of God's life is within Himself; it is not caused by anything external.**

**Baker's Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology**

3. The Bible story, as all stories, requires **context** in order to make sense.

a. Each "piece" of a story makes no sense without a context of how it fits into the "whole".

b. Most people are punctual when attending movies because no one wants to come into the middle of the story and try to figure out what's going on. And yet that is exactly what most people do when they want to figure out the Bible story!\*

**\*My approach to the Bible is to see it as a giant jigsaw puzzle, with all the pieces spilled out onto the table. The only way I can hope to understand where the pieces fit is to continually refer to the "big picture" on the lid of the box. If I keep looking at the "whole", I can see more clearly how all the "pieces" fit together!**

4. The "Big Picture" on the Bible box is **Jesus!**

a. The Bible story is essentially about a "Father" and His "Son".

b. Jesus did not come into existence in the manger in Bethlehem. His "incarnation" was not His beginning.

c. Roughly 2500 years after the death of Abraham, Jesus outraged the religious leaders of His day when He declared Himself to be God!

***(And they said to Jesus), Even Abraham and the prophets died, but you say, Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die! Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?***

***Jesus answered, If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me. You say, He is our God, but you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you! But I do know him and obey him. Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad."***

***The people said, You aren't even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham? Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM! 59 At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.***

**John 8:52-59 NLT**

d. After His resurrection, Jesus is walking with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus...

***Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

**Luke 24:25-27 KJV**

5. The beginning of the story is foundational for all that follows.
  - a. If the foundation of a building is faulty, the building can't stand.
  - b. In the same way, if the beginning of the Bible is untrue, allegorical or not factual, we have no reason to believe the rest of it.
  - c. This is why the Book of Genesis is the most attacked portion of the Word of God. If the Bible story is God's self-revelation of Himself and His testimony of how everything came into being is not true, we can have no faith that any of the rest of it is true.

## **II. The Most Important Verse In The Bible**

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

**Genesis 1:1 KJV**

### **A. The Most Important Question You Can Ask Anybody**

1. The fundamental precondition for faith in anything the Bible says hinges on our acceptance of Genesis 1:1. So the most fundamental question you can ask anyone, (including yourself), is:

***"Do you believe in a created universe"?***

2. Everything else in the Bible depends upon the truth of this statement.
  - The term "beginning" always refers to time. So was there a "beginning", a "moment" when time, as we know it, actually began?
  - Was there a Being, called God, who pre-existed time?
  - Did this Being, called God, actually "create" the heavens and the earth? (Notice the term is not "made", implying forming something out of that which already existed, but "created", meaning "ex nihilo", "out of nothing"?)
3. If Genesis 1:1 is **true**, many other philosophies and theories **cannot** be true!

"In the beginning, God..." denies **Atheism**, with its belief in **no God**

"In the beginning, God..." denies **Polytheism**, with its belief in **many Gods**

“In the beginning, God...” denies **Fatalism**, with its belief in *chance*

“In the beginning, God...” denies **Evolution**, with its belief in *infinite becoming*

“In the beginning, God...” denies **Pantheism**, which *makes God and the universe identical*

“In the beginning, God...” denies **Materialism**, which asserts the *eternity of matter*

**J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, Zondervan**

## **B. High Stakes Debate**

1. The debate over the veracity of the Genesis account is fundamental to the faith.
2. The first 5 books of each testament are foundational to all the rest.
  - a. If the 5 books of Moses, (called the Pentateuch), are not true, the Old Testament falls.
  - b. If the first 5 books of the New Testament, (the Gospels and the book of Acts) are untrue, the New Testament falls.
3. So in a very real sense, the first Book of the Bible supports all the rest, and the first **verse** of the first Book supports everything else.
4. Is it any wonder that the Book of Genesis is the most challenged book in scripture? Even Christ-followers are pressured to believe that:
  - Evolutionism and Creationism are somehow compatible
  - The story of Adam and Eve is not literal or historical, but allegorical
  - Science has disproved the Bible on the basis of geological and fossil records
5. To give in on any point is not only unnecessary, but fatal to faith.

## **C. Contrasting Two Philosophies**

### **Creationism**

God created everything

There is purpose behind everything

Man is made in image and likeness of God

### **Evolution**

Matter is eternal, all life forms evolved

All is chance and “natural selection”

Man is evolved from monkeys

1. While some object that Creationism is difficult to believe, Darwinism is even more so, and leads rational beings to posit some powerful questions as to its popularity:

- Which doctrine is more ennobling to man? Why would anyone not want to believe they are purposefully created in the image and likeness of a Supreme Being called God rather than that they are the product of “slime plus time”?
- Which teaching gives man a sense of true destiny and purpose? His intentional creation by a Sovereign God or the purposelessness of endless evolution?
- If everything originated with a “Big Bang”, what went “Bang”?

2. Many professing Christians confess to struggling with how to believe the Bible in the face of so much “evidence” against it from Evolutionists and science. But there are Bible answers for all these objections, including the studies showing the age of the earth as millions of years in comparison with the (approximate) 6,000 years recorded in scripture.

#### **D. Two Important Refutations of Darwinism**

1. First of all, it is clear that there is an interminable ‘gap’ of time between the first two verses of the Bible, Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. We’ll cover this in more detail later. But for now remember that the “beginning” in verse 1 and the verb “was” in verse 2 should most certainly be translated “became”, and therefore, these 2 verses could well be separated by millions of years. This “Gap Theory” would certainly accommodate fossil records and carbon dating as well as explain the mysterious condition of God’s universe as “without form and void”.

2. Second of all, and this is most fascinating to consider, God’s creation, from its outset, had an “appearance of age”. This means that although “new” in the moment it was made, creation nevertheless could have a built-in “age”. A good example of how this works is in the creation of Adam. Adam was created with an “appearance of age”. He was not created an infant, but as a full-grown man. If we had seen Adam in the very moment he took his first breath, we would not have thought of him as “brand new”. While we don’t know how “old” Adam appeared to be, we can certainly know he was “younger” than he appeared to be!

a. Let me close with one final illustration that confirms the believability of the Genesis account. Jesus “first miracle” was the turning of water into wine at the wedding at Cana.

***On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, They have no wine. Jesus said to her, Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Whatever He says to you, do it. Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them,***

***Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast. And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now! This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.***

**John 2:1-11 NKJV**

b. “Good wine” was “old” wine! The cheap stuff was readily recognizable to the Jews of the day. Jesus turned the water into “new” wine that was “old” wine! No wonder this was the “beginning of miracles” and produced faith in His disciples!

3. The right approach to the bible is to accept it on face value as the testimony and story of a Person called “God”...His account of what happened and how it happened. All faith flows from that!