Genesis 1:1-8

- There's always a danger when reading a familiar portion of Scripture such as the Christmas story of just skimming the surface.
- Genesis 1:1 is like that: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and on we go, straining the words through our eyes like some well-known nursery rhyme.
- We are always the losers when we do that.

 But if we take a closer look at God's Word and ask the Holy Spirit to open our understanding, we will make some amazing discoveries.

Certainly this is true of Genesis.

- For instance, the very first chapter of this amazing book is the most God-centred portion of scripture in the Bible.
- God is mentioned by name 32 times in 31 verses, and if you add the personal pronouns, He is referred to no less than 43 times.
- No wonder Satan has made such an effort to discredit this book.

One thing that becomes apparent as we read the book of Genesis is the fact that some things are only hinted at, rather than being explained in detail.

How should we react to this situation?

Should we pick up on these clues and speculate on their meaning?

- Are we adding to the Word of God if we consider the possibilities that scripture might suggest?
- Certainly we must be careful not to read into scripture things that are not really there.
- Many false cults and heresies have been created by such practices.
- On the other hand, God wants us to search the scriptures, to dig out the hidden jewels He has placed there for our discovery.
- Luke 11:9 admonishes us to "--- Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."
- Does that only apply to salvation?
 No, I don't think so.

- And even those whom God used to write His

 Holy Scriptures had questions of their

 own.
- No, they didn't understand everything, but they weren't afraid to search.
- We see that brought out in 1 Peter 1:10-11.

 "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:
 - 11: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."
- They couldn't distinguish between Christ's first coming and His second, even though they had written about them.

- They looked at His sufferings and His glory, and wondered what it all meant.
- No, they didn't fully understand what the

 Holy Spirit, which was in them, was
 saying, but they "searched diligently."
- And maybe they even guessed just a little, and maybe they didn't, but they always confined their thinking to the truths contained in God's Word, and to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

- So sometimes in the book of Genesis, we can only examine the possibilities that might exist, the possibilities that scripture seems to suggest.
- In these cases, any conclusions we come to will be theoretical, but none of them will affect existing doctrine or alter fundamental beliefs.

- So why do you even bother?
- Well, for the same reason we search any portion of God's Word.
- We search because everything God says, or even hints at, is important.

- One of the basic mistakes we make when studying the book Genesis is to look at the events recorded there in the context of our present-day environment.
- However, it appears that the world before the flood was radically different from our own.
- And when we are aware of these differences, the accounts described in this book will become much more understandable.

- So let's begin at the beginning, Genesis 1:1

 --- "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
- We're not told when this beginning took place.
- Obviously the Holy Spirit considered that information relatively unimportant.
- However, when we come to the fourth word in the Bible, we are immediately confronted with God, and that is important!
- So right from the beginning, it becomes quite evident that God's priorities are not man's priorities.

Evolutionists are extremely interested in the beginning.

- They would love to prove that it happened millions of years ago, in order to support their theories.
- But they couldn't care less about the fourth word in the Bible, unless it was possible to prove it didn't even exist.
- But God does exist, and so do His witnesses.
- In fact, they are found in this very same verse.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

- One only needs to open his eyes, and he will find himself completely surrounded by conclusive evidence of God's existence.
- And because of this hard evidence, the Holy Spirit makes no theological argument to support His claim.
- He simply treats God's existence as a given fact.

- There is no theological evidence presented here, because none is necessary.
- In "the heaven and the earth," God has provided us with two indisputable witnesses.
- And in doing so, He has followed His own biblical rules.

- In the laws of Israel, God required at least two witnesses in the case a serious crime.
- Deuteronomy 17:6 "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."
- So God has given us two universal, indisputable witnesses to the fact of His existence.

- And within "the heaven and the earth" there are literally millions of additional witnesses to the same fact.
- Psalm 19:1-4 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
 - 2: Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
 - 3: There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
 - 4: Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world---."

It is imperative that man believe in God, and because of this, God has made it perfectly obvious, at least to anyone with an open mind, that He exists.

- Belief in a Creator is absolutely essential, because it is the first step to salvation.
- However, it is only the first step.
- And like the first, the second step requires
 witnesse--"How then shall they call on
 him in whom they have not believed? and
 how shall they believe in him of whom
 they have not heard? and how shall they
 hear without a preacher?"
- Unfortunately, millions are still unaware of the fact that Jesus died for them.
- Many do not have the life-giving message in their own language, or in their hearts, because we haven't told them.
- It is our appointed task, but it is still unfinished.

- That can never be said of God's two witnesses.
- In every generation, in every language, and in every place, they have faithfully proclaimed the fact that there is a Creator.
- And because of their witness, there is no excuse for the idol worshipper.
- There is no excuse for the atheist, and there is no excuse for the evolutionist.

- Today, modern science can probe the smallest atom or look out into God's vast universe.
- As they do so, they are literally bombarded with evidence.

- Their telescopes declare "the glory of God," and their microscopes show forth "his handywork."
- They are literally surrounded by His perfect order and design.
- Let me give you just one example of "his handywork."

- I'm sure we've all heard about those amazing atomic clocks that keep our world on time.
- Apparently they will only be out by a few seconds in 100,000 years.
- Do you know where they get that amazing standard of accuracy from?
- They rely on the structure of atoms and molecules, of which one is the lowly molecule of ammonia gas.

Just think of it!

- The space program, indeed the whole scientific world, relies on a molecule of ammonia gas for its accuracy.
- And where do they find such a perfect molecule?
- Actually, they don't have to look very far.
- Any molecule of ammonia gas will do, because every molecule of ammonia gas is designed so perfectly that it can keep a clock on time for 100,000 years.
- Man is quite aware of this perfect design, and yet he still holds the truth in unbelief.
- Certainly God cannot ignore such arrogant unbelief.
- He must draw His conclusions and pronounce His judgment.
- In Romans 1:18-20, we read, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against

- all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
- 19: Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.
- 20: For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
- Certainly there are multitudes in our world who know not Jesus, but they cannot claim ignorance when it comes to their Creator.
- The "heaven and the earth" and the vast multitude of witnesses they contain

have faithfully carried out their work since the beginning of creation.

So in that respect, "they are without excuse."

The idol worshipper who relegates God to some graven image, the atheist who says there is no God, and the evolutionist who claims there is no creator, are without excuse!

They should know better!

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But for the Christian, creation speaks to him every day and in every way:

Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen!
Birds with gladder songs oe'r flow,
Flowers with deeper beauty shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His and He is mine."

- But even creation is not enough.
- It can bring man to the realization that there is a Creator, but only the Word of God can bring him to his Saviour.
- So I'm not promoting nature worship, nor am

 I suggesting we forsake God's house for
 the open road.
- However, there is medicine and rehabilitation to be found in God's creation.
- As Jesus once said to His overwrought disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."
- Or, as someone has so aptly put it, "Come ye apart before you come apart."
- Yes, sometimes we must forsake our concrete jungles and plastic world and just step into His workshop.

Sometimes we need to take the time to find out what our Heavenly Father is making today.

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- So let's get back to Genesis 1:1 --- "In the beginning God (and no one else) created the heaven and the earth."
- That's exactly how it all began, and that's exactly what we believe.
- If we can't trust the Holy Spirit to tell us about creation, how can we trust Him to tell us about salvation, or anything else for that matter?

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V 2 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

- V 2 gives us a detailed description of the kind of "heaven and the earth" that God had created in "the beginning."
- Our planet was formless, dark, empty, and covered with water.
- Except for the presence of water, it was very much like the other planets in the starry heavens.
- However, in spite of its seeming desolation, it was still His creation, and it was created for a purpose.
- It would provide the raw materials for an absolutely unique environment, an environment full of life and wonder.
- Yes, this formless empty world was the canvas on which the Master Painter would produce His masterpieces.

- V 2-3 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
 - 3: And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."
- The Apostle Paul makes a connection between God's first creation, found in these verses, and another wonderful work of creation on the behalf of fallen man.
- We see that in 2 Corinthians 4:6 "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
- V 3 "And God said, Let there be light: and
 there was light."

- This was the first of 10 creative commandments found in Genesis 1.
- Not one of them has ever been broken, while man has failed to keep even one of His other 10 Commandments.

I'm not a Greek scholar, but I am told that the meaning of the original text in V 3 is more in the sense of -- Let there be light made to appear.

And that seems more understandable to me.

We all know that the sun, which is our source of light, was brought into existence when God "created the heaven and the earth."

So when He said "Let there be light," He must have rolled back the mists of this dark empty planet and let His light shine in.

- And that's what happened when God "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
- Our lives were directionless and empty, and darkness was upon the restless waves of our life.
- But then God looked upon our helpless condition and said, "Let there be light."
- That's when His Son, the Light of the World, shone into our hearts.
- Oh, He had always been there, shining in all
 His brightness, but on that glorious
 day, God rolled back the mists of this
 dark empty world, and -- "The people
 which sat in darkness saw great light;
 and to them which sat in the region and
 shadow of death light is sprung up."

V 4 "And God saw the light, that it was
 good: and God divided the light from
 the darkness."

We do not have a twilight God.

He always divides the light from the darkness.

And sometimes when He does that, it hurts.

Certainly, He provides fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but He also divides "the light from the darkness".

And that includes our loved ones, if they prefer to walk in darkness.

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V 5 "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

- If we had written this verse, we would have said the morning and evening were the first day.
- But God said "-- the evening and the morning were the first day."
- That's God's order, and that's the way His Chosen People do it.
- Yes, they begin their day with the evening. But we don't do it that way.
- We start our new day (would you believe it?) at 12 o'clock midnight.
- Now that makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?
- And when New Years comes around, I think some of us would be happier to do it God's way.

So let's go on.

As I have already noted, some things in Genesis are only hinted at.

We can present plausible theories strongly suggested by the Word of God, but, of course, they are only theories.

- V 6-8 "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
 - And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
 - 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."
- These verses describe the distribution of the available water at the time of creation.

- It was divided into two parts by a firmament which is called heaven.
- There are three heavens mentioned in scripture.
- First of all, there's that wonderful place in glory.
- It is the abode of the Father and the Son, and, of course, the heavenly host.
- Then there are the starry heavens, which show forth the immensity of God's creation.
- And, finally, we have the firmament that is spoken of in these verses.
- It is the atmosphere immediately above the earth, God's beautiful heaven with its clouds and sunsets and winged creatures.

- According to V 6, this firmament, or atmosphere, divided the available water in the midst.
- And it's that little word "midst" that will command our attention for awhile.
- The Greek word, which is translated "midst" in this verse, is tavek (taw-vek).
- However, since most of us are not Greek scholars, this information in itself is not too helpful.
- But it does allow us to pinpoint other places in scripture where this same word appears, and then we can examine the surrounding context in each case.

Certainly there's no question about its

present-day meaning.

If we use the word "midst," we are referring to the middle.

- If we say we are in the midst of trouble, we don't mean we're having a little problem, we mean we're right in the thick of it.
- But is that what the Greek word means?

 Well, let's have a look at some other

 passages where this same Greek word is

 used.
- Genesis 3:3 speaks of -- "the tree which is in the midst of the garden."
- From that description, I don't think anyone here would envision the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as being at the edge of the garden.
- However, I suppose that could be a matter of opinion.

In Exodus 3, we have another example of the use of this word.

- Exodus 3:2 speaks of the fire in the burning bush as being in the "midst of a bush."
- I don't see how that word could give anyone the idea that there was a little fire hovering around the edges of the bush.
- No, it pictures a flame blazing forth from the very middle of the bush.
- But I suppose this could still be a matter of opinion, so let's take a third example.
- In Exodus 14, the word tâvek (taw-vek) is used to describe the path taken by the children of Israel through the Red Sea.
- Exodus 14:22 "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground."
- I'm sure there are those who would like to believe they walked around the edge of

- the sea, but you and I know they went right through the middle.
- And even if some people would prefer to explain away this miracle, God's Word doesn't give them that option.
- Exodus 14:22 says "--and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."
- And those walls weren't 5 inches high either.
- When God said "the midst of the sea," He meant the middle.
- And when God said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," He didn't mean somewhere in between, He meant the middle.
- And by definition, that would put just as much water above the firmament as there was below it.

- Certainly that doesn't describe our presentday situation.
- Today, only 1/1000th of 1% of the available water in our world is up in the atmosphere.
- Of course someone is bound to say, maybe God only meant somewhere in between.
- As ridiculous as that argument is, let's apply it to our examples.
- If God just meant somewhere in between rather than the middle, then it would be logical to say that the tree was somewhere in the garden and the fire was somewhere in the burning bush, and most importantly, the children of Israel really didn't go through the middle of the Red Sea at all.

- I heard about a school teacher who was trying to explain away this particular miracle.
- According to him, that body of water was actually called the Reed Sea, and it was only a few inches deep.
 - So you see class, there was nothing amazing about this crossing at all.
 - They would have merely gotten their feet wet.
- He would have been quite pleased with himself, had not a little boy punctuated his ridiculous statement with the words, "Praise the Lord! What a miracle!"
- Exasperated, the teacher asked his little student why he thought the story was so miraculous.

Why, said little boy, I find it absolutely amazing that God could drown an entire Egyptian army in a few inches of water!

- Of course that's only a story, but the fact remains, when God said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,"

 He wasn't creating the system we have today.
- A firmament which separates 1/1000th of 1% of the available water from the other 99.99% could never have been described as being *in the middle*.
- So the only conclusion we can come to is that things have changed.
- There must have been an entirely different system in existence in the beginning.

- Next week we will be examining this most unusual distribution of the world's water, and we will be considering its influence on the earth's environment.
- And this is only one of several differences that existed in that age.
- I hope you can be with us next week as we continue our study of this most unusual book.