

TUTORIAL
2.2

Our Creator is always with us

We look back at the events at the beginning of time, reflecting on God and how He revealed His character through His creative power, and enjoy our relationship with Our Creator.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are:

Deuteronomy 33:27, Psalm 95, Job 38:4-11, Genesis 1:1-2.

Last time

We thought about what we'll do before taking up the Narrative again and hearing what happens after Jesus returned to His Father in Heaven. We'll briefly review what we've already covered, but with some differences. Last time we were swept along by the flow of the Narrative as it moved towards Jesus coming to the earth, His life, then death and resurrection. Now we'll take a brief moment to look back at where we've come from, but through the 'lens' of the Gospel...enjoying the safety and wonderful new identity we have because of what He accomplished.

In the beginning...

As we go back to the very start of God's Story, we remember that it starts with those very simple but profound words, "In the beginning God..." In our society we're constantly assailed by all kinds of opinions, concepts, assumptions and theories that make claims to know how our universe began. The current three top 'hits' from a Google search for "origins of the universe" are entries from National Geographic, Wikipedia and Scientific American, all of which, not surprisingly, allow no place for the personal Creator God who states in the Bible that He was there "in the beginning".

This belief in the non-existence of God (and it is in almost every sense a religious *belief*) cannot by definition be based on any evidence. No matter how carefully cloaked in scientific language and theory, such assertions represent very clear commitments people make *not* to believe. For millions of people, when they look up into a night sky and imagine the vast expanse of the universe, they see only impersonal forces at play. They try to imagine a cosmos billions of years old...and God is absent from it. There's no one there to speak, no one to care, it's cold and still.

What a wonderful thing it is for us, His children, to think about eternity - or at least try to think about it - with God always there, always present. We find incredible joy and comfort in the certainty that we are not the product of eons of blind chance...or the eventual result of conditions created when an impersonal singularity in a black hole exploded matter into existence. When life seems to be spinning out of control and there's nothing to hold on to, when it seems like everything and everyone keeps changing around us...how amazing it is for us as God's children to know that He's always been there, has always been the same. In words recorded in Deuteronomy 33:27, Moses says to the Israelites - and this applies to us now too because of what Jesus has done for us - "The eternal God is your refuge and his everlasting arms are under you."

The Three-in-One-God

And the God who was there at the beginning, who IS there, is not just some detached impersonal force. The picture He gives us in His Narrative is not of some static existence, a kind of Divine singularity...like He's just 'there' in some purely mystical way. Not at all. God is alive in the fullest sense of the word, and more. And He's personal. Three persons in fact. The One-in-Three-God...Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Relating, communicating, unified as One.

The *unity in diversity* we see in the Trinity (having unique qualities but oneness in fundamental nature) will prove to be a pattern for what God wants to see among His people. Later, as we follow the ongoing Narrative, and as we glimpse what He intends for His people - how He draws them from the widest possible variety of situations, and makes them *one* - we'll see there a reflection of the Divine-variety-yet-Unity that existed even before the world was created...but that's still to come.

God created the universe

Then, God says at the beginning of His Narrative, He created the heavens and the earth. Although God was completely fulfilled, not needing anything to satisfy any lack, He chose to create the universe, the laws and reality that govern it, and this amazing planet we live on. Out of nothing, just because He chose to. He conceived the entire plan for this immensely complex and beautiful world completely from His wisdom and creativity...then carried out that plan through the power of His Word.

One of the much-loved songs of Israel, Psalm 95, calls them, and us, to sing and worship the Lord, the "Rock of our salvation", describing - metaphorically of course - how "He holds in His hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains." It states that, "the sea belongs to him for He made it". And that "His hands formed the dry land". God, through these words of a song written by one of His servants, is laying claim to the world by the rights of Creator. And of course that's obviously the way it should be. He made it, and so He owns it. That too is incredibly encouraging for us. Even though, as we

look around us today, it sometimes feels as if things in this world are out of control...although it might seem like evil is winning...that the darkness and chaos of the world system is dominating... we come back to the bedrock certainty that God, the Creator of the Universe, is the ultimate Owner. That's what we mean when we call Him Lord. He's the Master.

As humans, we tend to ask questions out of our very limited perspectives. But often we don't have enough basis of understanding to even frame the questions, much less answer them. This was the point God made when His servant Job questioned whether he'd been treated justly (Job 38:4-11). God responded with a series of His own questions, beginning with, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" When we think about that it becomes laughable that we take it on ourselves to question the way God deals with us. He is God, the Architect and Builder of the Universe. He knew exactly where the earth needed to be in relationship to the sun to sustain life. And He knows exactly what is best for His children who He has ransomed with the blood of His Son, Jesus.

We know that after Jesus died He rose again and then returned in His new body to be with God the Father. This is related to His willingness to limit Himself - as a man - to a specific physical location. But God, as a Trinity, is everywhere at the same time. For those who are still under the sentence of God's judgement, that's a very scary reality. But for us who've accepted the amazing reality that Jesus took that judgement on Himself, it's a different story. For us there should be no fear at all in knowing that God is always with us, always understands what we're going through, always sees the things that we're struggling with. It means that He's always available for us to turn to and ask for His help, His guidance and encouragement.

God's Spirit created order and life

At the beginning of His Narrative, God describes the Spirit (Member of the Divine Unity or Trinity) as being there in a dark, chaotic and empty universe, ready to begin the process of creation (Genesis 1:1-2). In light of all the many ways people - including Christians - choose to understand this account, it's worth remembering that God chose to give this exact description, with precisely the level of detail He wanted us to have. His purpose for us as His children is to keep growing in our faith and appreciation of who He is in all His amazing majesty. He is in no way threatened by our questions or even doubts, but we have to bring them to Him honestly and humbly... acknowledging that they represent *our* lack of understanding, not a breakdown in His absolute power, holiness and love.

So the Spirit of God was there in the beginning with the Father and the Son, actively engaged in bringing light, order and life. We're reminded of the Spirit's work in our own lives. Separated from God, we were spiritually in darkness and chaos, and empty. But God's Spirit was there preparing our hearts for what

only God could do. He spoke Truth into our hearts, shining His light and creating life where only death existed. And just like with the creation of the universe, He is committed to completing what He has started out on. He is devoted to the process of shaping us into the people He wants us to be. So we can relax in the confidence that we don't have to make ourselves better, to sort out the confusion that exists, to try to be different people. As we continue to listen with open hearts to His Narrative, He reveals Himself, His values and purposes to us...and His Spirit is eagerly waiting to help us apply those things in real life situations.

We read in the Creation account of each day unfolding, bringing new incredible things that God is doing. Everything is done well. Everything is excellent, perfect. That's who God is. He doesn't leave things half done. He doesn't start something and become bored with it. He gives himself wholeheartedly. He was making a place, a home, for His image-bearers. And He made a perfect fit between the home and the inhabitants. That provides us with another picture of what God is doing with us as individuals and - as His Narrative will go on to show - with us as a group (or *body*) of His children. As we know, God's Spirit actually lives in those people who by faith in Jesus, God's Son, have been restored to a relationship with God. So the Spirit living in us will continue to faithfully work toward creating a place to live in that is according to God's design. Yes, we've got a long way to go. But thankfully we have the Father, the Son and the Spirit completely on our side. The God who designed then created the universe, including our amazingly complex and beautiful planet, is the same God whose Spirit lives in *us* His children...and who is committed to making the narrative of our lives part of His great Narrative.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Our Creator is always with us

1. Reflect on the first sentence of Deuteronomy 33:27. What does it mean to you that the eternal God is your *refuge* (NLT) or *place of safety* (NCV)?” In your life, right now, do you feel that you often find your *refuge* in Him? If you were sharing these words from God's Word with a brand new believer, what areas do you think they would most likely need this applied to? How would you relate those thoughts to them in light of what they've already heard in the Narrative so far?

2. What do you feel is the right way to handle doubts or confusion we might have about God?
Should we:
 - a) Try to think of a verse or passage in the Bible to answer the question we have?
 - b) Ask someone else: friend, spouse, church leader, etc.?
 - c) View it as a sin that needs to be confessed?
 - d) Try to put the thought out of our minds?
 - e) Try to reason things out?
 - f) Bring the issue to God openly and ask Him to answer it somehow?
 - g) A combination of the above?
 - h) None of the above - some other way of dealing with it?