

IV. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective
Foundations from Genesis
“Foundation #2: The Sanctity of God—Part 2”
Genesis 1
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
October 3, 2021 • Sunday Evening Sermon

We will be looking at a number of texts because I want to substantiate some things for you concerning the sanctity of the doctrine of God, that is who God is. Before I read Genesis 1:1 I want to tell you I did a series of nine sermons on progressive Christianity that is cut from the same cloth as liberal Christianity, with the same motivation and mission that has to do with cultural relevance. The world gets turned upside down which is really right side up when the church is on its narrow mission of making disciples, that is sinners being transformed. Then we begin to take our Gospel message that saturates the whole counsel of God, which begins to turn out Christians whose mission is broad and comprehensive – salt of the earth. We are to do as we see in Micah 6:8 which says [8] *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* And we're to love the Lord our God with our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). We are called of the Lord to make Christ preeminent in every sphere of life. We know that God is sovereign over everything in life and we are to live with that confidence as we penetrate every area of life, but Christians can't do their broad mission if the church gets off of its narrow mission.

Knowing and seeing this movement outside (in the culture) in the secular progressive revolution and knowing it is inside, the evangelical church is now experiencing theological adulteration, why? It is because whatever your motivation and mission is, will eventually define your message, therefore you will have theological adulteration and theological apostasy. The best defense of this is to be on mission, on message and in ministry and that means as a pastor I have to be committed to the church mission which is to make disciples through evangelism (outreach) and discipleship (downreach – to grow deep), believers who know how to do the ministry of worship to God (upreach), and the ministry of inreach as we learn together to love one another well as we reach out to the world to speak the truth in love.

So, this year to stay with our theme of lifestyle stewardship I have done a series to give you 13 foundational essentials of the Christian's life given to us by the Apostles' Creed. Then I did the series on progressive Christianity which I kind of summed up at the beginning of this study. I do feel a deep gratitude to be able to invest in the lives of those who want to go with me through this current series of what I am calling the 15 effective foundations and draw them all out from the book of Genesis. Satan in his assault tends to shake the foundations. Psalm 11:3 says [3] *if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

First, they take refuge, not in the foundations but in the Lord (Psalm 11:1). Then we need to understand the foundations for the sanctities of what God has provided for us, in terms of who God is, what God has done, what is He doing in us and how we are to live in light of that. These are foundations for the Christian life. The Scripture enlarges and expounds on these acts of God found in the book of Genesis, which is creation, the fall, redemption and the consummation and its in these acts of God we take refuge. Who is He that you are taking refuge in? Is He capable? This is so important that Jesus made an astonishing statement in John 17:3; [3] *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

‘Know’ is – ology and God is -Theo which makes theology and theology is not a side track. It is to come into an accurate and intimate knowledge of who God is – the One who created you, redeems you, everyday sustains you and one day will bring everything to a consummation. Who is He who is worthy of our worship, who is dependable upon whom we trust, who is mighty to save, who is able to deliver us from and through the adversity into His presence?

I am absolutely convinced that if we don’t see who God is and therefore the greatness of our God we will never really know Him intimately, accurately and personally. We will never know Him exhaustively, even in eternity. So if this is so crucial to know God then why is it sanctity number two? The reason is you can’t know God without sanctity number one, which is Divine revelation where God is light and His nature is to reveal Himself. Sanctity number one has two parts to it. One there is general revelation which is God making Himself known in creation and providence. Secondly, is the importance of the primacy of God’s special revelation in His Word which is where we get our framework, filter and focus from. God’s Word gives us the framework of how to deal with general revelation and its propositions.

God’s Word gives us a filter to evaluate what is being said. God does not contradict Himself in His Word nor does special revelation contradict general revelation and vice versa. God’s special revelation is the instrument to give us that frame, filter and focus when we prayerfully surrender to its preaching and to our personal study of His Word. We see the Berean Jews as an example of this in Acts 17:11 which says *[11] Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* Now with the Word of God you can know the God of the Word who is revealing Himself in revelation and specificity as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer and Judge in His Word. God starts this right in the book of Genesis and begins to unfold it throughout the Scriptures.

Before we get into this study, I will recap part one of the foundation of the sanctity of God. What is God? God is a Spirit. What about Jesus? That is God’s Son taking upon Himself flesh but until then and in eternity God is Spirit – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is also infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Nothing gets added to God. God is not in need of anything. He doesn’t grow. God doesn’t become something. God is – I Am that I Am. Then we looked at the attributes of God in His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. This is not an exhaustive list but it is an essential list of His attributes and how they are displayed. This led us to question 5 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism which is, are there more Gods than One? The answer is there is but One only, the living and true God. This is an important question to ask which we will cover in this study. We see this in Deuteronomy 6:4 which says *[4] Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,* and Jeremiah 10:10 which says *[10] But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.*

We also learned in that last study how many Persons are in the Godhead and that is where we will go deeper in this study. There are three Persons in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are One – the same in substance, equal in power and glory. Up until 2,000 years ago the Three all dwelt as Spirit and then Jesus comes into the world. He humbles Himself, not by subtraction but by addition, for He takes upon Himself humanity – a true human body and a true human soul. He then in that relationship He submits to the Father in that Incarnate state to accomplish the will of the Father from which the work of the Holy Spirit will bring to consummation. As Jesus is raised He receives a glorified body that will be with Him forever which becomes an extraordinary blessing for us for now we will be able to see Him. If

He was in His unveiled state, the state He had before coming to earth, He could not be looked upon, not even the angels can for they were equipped with wings that would keep them in the air to cover their eyes, for no man can look upon Him and live. Yet we will not only see the Incarnate Christ, but we will see the marks upon Him declaring His love for you to save you from your sins.

It crucial that we understand the doctrine of the Trinity. It is one of the great heresies that invaded even the Reformed church and took people into theological heresy. There were two great challenges – one was to the doctrine of the Trinity and the other was to the two natures of Christ, being one hundred percent God and one hundred percent Man. We will take on this matter of Jesus later in this series but right now we will look further in the doctrine of the Trinity because this should affect everything in our life. If we do our worship right no one should leave our church not knowing that we believe in One God who dwells in three Persons. It is built into the Scriptures, substantiated and is progressively unfolded for us.

One might be thinking I said earlier that God was a Spirit but doesn't the Bible also say man is upheld by God's right arm and that the eye of the Lord is upon the earth? Yes it does and that is something we call anthropomorphisms (anthro, man – po, like – morphisms, body parts). We can't think in abstractions for we are made with a true body and true soul so when God is describing who He is and what He does He will graciously surrender to 'baby talk.' That is, He will put who He is and what He does in human terms so that we can understand it. When you think of the strength of someone, what do you normally think of? You think of the right arm. When it says that the eye of the Lord is upon the whole earth He is trying to tell us that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, not that He has this gigantic eye or something rolling around the earth. There is none like Him but He is personal so He uses the bodily parts from our person to describe the actions He does whereby He has created us and to teaches us about who He is.

There are also anthropopathism – anthro, man – po, like – pathos, emotions. We see this when the Bible talks about God grieving or laughing or being angry or loving. These are really describing the dynamics of who God is but it is put in humanlike emotional experiences so we can understand something about Him. Now, let's get started in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1–2 says [1] *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* [2] *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.* It is right here that the doctrine of the Trinity is not developed in detail but accommodated and anticipated with integrity. The doctrine of the Trinity will continue to unfold throughout the 1600 years of progressive revelation as God continues to let us know who He is. Especially in the Old Testament people are going to balk at the idea that there are three Persons in One God and they will say something like 'that's not logical' but we would say 'it's supralogical but it's not illogical.' In essence there is one God but in subsistence dwells in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible gives us that embryonic truth in Genesis 1:1–2 and then begins to flesh it out and grow it for us with clarity as God reveals Himself throughout Scripture.

So how does God do this? One of the ways that God begins to let us know who He is, is by taking on the gods of this world and that's what Genesis 1:1 does – in the beginning God **created** the heavens and the earth. In John 1 we find out that the Father who created, bringing everything out of nothing, did so through His Son for His Son as the Spirit of God – a Trinitarian act, where the Father authors it, the Son accomplishes it and the Holy Spirit superintends it. We can see it right here in Genesis because the word God singular is not used which is El, but the

word for God that is used in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim and God doesn't use the verb, to be, for the plural or He only uses the singular. Elohim is and it's a plurality, but when He uses the plurality that accommodates the doctrine of the Trinity He affirms its singularity by declaring that the Lord God is – not God are or Gods are – it's the Triune God is, One God. Yet in the context we find the further anticipation of the Trinity.

We're about to go through the creation and God will form the earth in the first three days. God will fill the earth in the next three days. Have you heard the term 'click bait'? It is when on the internet content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page. If they get enough clicks, they can charge more money for their advertising. In a sanctified sense, particular Genesis 1:1–11 is click bait, because surrounding Israel when this is written, through the author Moses, are people who worship the god of the sun, the moon, the stars, plants – it was pagan polytheism. Now Genesis 1:1 drops the bomb shell. Those aren't gods for there is only One God who created all of those things. This is not cultural accommodation, it is cultural confrontation, it is counter cultural. When Paul goes to Mars Hill they tell him he is talking of strange deities – deities that made our deities. Who is this Paul? We want to hear more from him. So even as this is done in Genesis we see an anticipation of this Triune God.

Do you see why we use God as a Person? It is because He is in a relationship so He is personal and there is relationship in the Trinity, yet one God as we will see here in Genesis 1:26–27 which says [26] *Then 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."* [27] *So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

This doesn't give us the details of the doctrine of the Trinity but it anticipates it, it accommodates it and as the doctrine of God unfolds in the Scriptures it makes sense why God speaking from the singular would speak in terms of His actions, with plurality – **Let us** make man in **our image**... God is creating – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We see it in other texts of Scripture as well. Let's look at Proverbs 30.

In Proverbs 30 you will see the transcendence of God as well. Proverbs 30:4–5 says [4] *Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name? Surely you know! [5] Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.* So here we see the anticipation of the Trinity in the Divinely inspired revelation of general wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Now let's look at Genesis 11.

In Genesis 11 we read about the tower of Babel. Genesis 11:6–7 says [6] *And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. [7] Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."* Here we see the counsel of the Trinity as it is accommodated by the plurality of the pronoun as God comes down to bring judgment upon Babel and the creation of the ethnicities of the world. So we have seen the plurality of the name for God by the use of Elohim though the singular verb to be and secondly we have seen the accommodations of the plural pronouns – us – throughout the Old Testament although we have only looked at a few of them. Actually I would like to give you one more of these from Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6:1–8 says [1] *In the year that King Uzziah died (the earthly king dies) I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple (The King of Kings is self-existent, self-sufficient and it forever).* [2] *Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* [3] *And one called to another and said:*

“Holy (normative), holy (comparative), holy (superlative) is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!

[4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of Him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

[6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” (Here is the anticipation of the Son to come.)

[8] And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

Now these texts don’t give us the doctrine of the Trinity in its fullness yet but it will. I had the opportunity to defend the doctrine of the Trinity when I was in seminary from Isaiah 40 and Isaiah 11 so there are many more I could show you but I just wanted you to see the second dynamic of the texts that are anticipating the full blown, clear doctrine of the Trinity as it unfolds and is declared in the Old Testament and affirmed in the New Testament.

Thirdly, is out of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4 which says [4] *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* One here is the word singular with the dynamic of plurality. It was also used to describe a cluster (singular) of grapes (plural). I want to show you another place this is used from Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:23–24 says [23] *Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” [24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh**.* Same use of the word one – one with plurality. He could have used the word one with singularity but He chooses the one with plurality. This is the word used to speak of God and the Lord God is, not are, One, yet the word accommodates the multiplicity of the Trinity.

Number four the doctrine of the Trinity is further revealed by the theophanies in the Old Testament. They are usually identified by the phrase ‘**the** angel of the Lord.’ That is very careful rendering in the Bible. There are times when you will see ‘an angel of the Lord’ or ‘an angel from the Lord’ but ‘the’ as the article in front of this phrase, as affirmed in the New Testament by Jesus Himself, is a preincarnate appearance of Christ and ministry of the second Person of the Trinity. We see the phrase ‘the angel of the Lord’ with Jacob, Abraham, and in the burning bush with Moses. Once we have the Incarnate Christ who we have now for all eternity, this phrase is never used again in the New Testament.

Number five are the Messianic prophecies and the number of times God says ‘I will send My servant’ – Messiah – who will come – the Messiah is the eternal Father, the everlasting God, the Prince of Peace. There the Messianic prophecies are couched by God sending God to become a Man to save us.

Number six, in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity is that God is personal in His being and that means He is relational. I touched on this earlier in this study so whenever God speaks of

Himself as a Person then we know He has relationship and that relationship was the self-existent, self-sufficient relationship of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as One in three Persons for all eternity.

Number seven, note the New Testament assumption. Most of the New Testament authors were educated as little Jewish boys and they would have heard the Shema. Then when they realize the deity of Jesus, the deity of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Trinity notice they don't stumble over themselves to present this. They saw the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity as both consistent with and congruent with what had been revealed of God in the Old Testament. They didn't say they had this new idea of God, no it went right along with what they learned from the Old Testament.

Number eight, all of the great creeds and hymns in the church have unabashedly set forth the majesty of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Number nine, our great privileges in serving Christ – we worship Him, pray to Him, we evangelize and bring people to Him. All of that involves our embracing of the doctrine of the Trinity. When we worship we are supposed to have a Trinitarian worship – Jesus said in John 4 that the Father seeks true worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. We can praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost for we do here at Briarwood every Lord's Day when we sing the Doxology. The Trinity is praised for its One God but the Trinity is also praised in Trinitarian clarity – we praise the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. What we do in worship we also do in prayer – Jesus said when you pray, learn to pray 'Our Father, in My Name...' We have access to the Father through the name of Jesus as a legacy blessing, praying in the Spirit.

What about the Great Commission? That is Trinitarian. Matthew 28:18–20 says [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in the name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Jesus has a harvest and we're supposed to be praying to the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers. Who is the Lord of the harvest? It is the Holy Spirit. The Maker of the harvest is Jesus. The Owner of the harvest is the Father. It is the Holy Spirit who sends us in His power and our gifting to go as harvesters, workers in the harvest.

What about providence, trusting in God? God my Father, whose Son intercedes for me and the Holy Spirit is interceding for me with language too deep to be uttered. The doctrine of the Trinity declares creation – the Father authored it, the Son accomplished it and the Spirit applied it. The doctrine of the Trinity in Redemption – the Father authored our salvation to the praise of His glorious grace, the Son accomplished our salvation and the Holy Spirit is applying our salvation. In Providence – the Father is over us, the Son intercedes for us, and the Holy Spirit upholds us. In the Judgment – the Father appoints His Son as the Judge and the Holy Spirit is there to superintend the angels in the time of the Judgment itself. We are clearly to be a trinitarian people and therefore without any defensiveness we see it in the Great Commission.

I want to show you one more thing for there are clearly two things you need to stay away from in regards to the doctrine of the Trinity. One is to try and explain it with illustrations. They all fail. You can't illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity. We have to say it – One God dwells in three Persons, then we have to do something called knowledge by negation. That doesn't mean three Gods who get along great or one God who has three different uniforms and responsibilities. Jesus said 'when you have seen Me you have seen the Father (John 14:9) and the Holy Spirit is

called the Spirit of Christ. Sometimes you get to see it all and I want to show you that in the closing of this study. Let's look at Luke 1.

Luke 1:26–35 says [26] *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, [33] and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

[34] *And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."*

God the Father has sent the angel and angel told Mary that God was with her. Even more, the Most High has sent an angel to tell Mary that the Son of the Most High will come as a Man through her. Particularly in Luke 1:35 we see the Trinity – the Most High (Father), the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. The Father sends and announces. The Son will come forth of the Most High and will do so by the power of the Holy Spirit from the Most High. Now let's look at Matthew 3.

In Matthew 3 we find Jesus being ordained for His public ministry at age 30, being baptized and if you want to know how He was baptized read Numbers 8. Matthew 3:13–17 says [13] *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. [14] John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* In one event the Trinity in full action – the Father speaking from heaven and the Spirit of God coming upon Jesus, the Son of God.

I'd like to end this study with the Pauline benediction in I Corinthians 16. Paul understood the doctrine of the Trinity and incorporated it into the good Word of God that is given to the people of God. Here Paul declares the grace of the Lord Jesus, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the love of God the Father to be with us. I Corinthians 16:21–24 says [21] *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. [22] If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! [23] The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. [24] My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.* After declaring this, Paul then dismisses them.

If someone were to ask you to describe in one word who God is, what would you say? If you are like most evangelicals today you would probably say 'God is love.' You would be right there is another word used in the Bible that is the attribute of all attributes to say who God is and that is holy. It is the one attribute that modifies every other attribute. God's Spirit is holy. God's love is holy. God's grace is holy and that is who our God is. Holiness not only means purity but it means incomparability – no one can be compared to Him. The Lord our God alone is God. Our Trinitarian God is glorious and is to be praised. The closing prayer will be a benediction.

Prayer:

This prayer is a benediction as Paul gives it to the church at Rome. [33] *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

[34] *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”*

[35] *“Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?”*

[36] *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever.*

(Romans 11:33–36) Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whom I take refuge. Amen.

Power Point

The Sanctity of God

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only the living and true God.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.