



# PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path"  
Psalm 119:104*

May 8, 2016

## In the Beginning, God

by Frank Himmel

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

So begins the Bible. God's existence is not argued, it is assumed. In subsequent pages of Scripture numerous evidences for God's existence are suggested. At the top of page one, however, the fact is simply and boldly stated.

With this opening declaration, Almighty God immediately sets at naught numerous ideas about deity that have come to be prevalent among mankind. Among them are...

- *Atheism*, the belief that God does not exist. Genesis 1:1 begins with God.
- *Polytheism*, the belief that a number of different gods exist. It is interesting that Genesis was written in Moses' day, an era in which polytheism saturated the minds of the world's intellectuals. Yet Genesis 1:1 speaks of only one God.
- *Materialism*, the belief that physical matter is the only reality

and everything that exists is made from or results from matter. Genesis 1:1 begins with a spiritual reality, God, who created matter.

- *Naturalism*, the belief that everything came to be as it is only through natural processes (e.g., evolution), without any supernatural involvement. Genesis 1:1 says God created.
- *Pantheism*, a belief that blends God and His creation: God is all and all is God. In effect, "nature" or the "environment" becomes God. Genesis 1:1 says God is separate from His creation.

The first verse of the Bible also declares God's matchless power and wisdom. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Romans 1:20). "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

This initial statement of Scripture establishes one more vital truth: God's ownership and rule of all, and our obligation to submit to Him. "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers" (Psalm 24:1-2). As creator, God owns ▶

# Compassion, Not a Sacrifice

by Frank Himmel

When the Pharisees criticized Jesus because His disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath, the Lord’s response included this rebuke: “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent” (Matthew 12:7). It was one of several occasions on which Jesus chided the “experts” for how poorly they understood the Scriptures.



The passage Jesus quoted is Hosea 6:6: “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more

than burnt offerings” (NKJV). Surely God wanted sacrifices in Hosea’s day: He commanded them. But that is not all or even primarily what He wanted. Mostly, God wanted people whose hearts were devoted to Him and who would therefore act compassionately toward one another. (The NASB says *loyalty* instead of *mercy*; ESV says *steadfast love*. The Hebrew word includes the ideas of goodness, kindness, and faithfulness.)

Compare Hosea 5:4-6. There, the people brought their flocks and herds to seek God, but their deeds were such that there would be no finding Him. Without faithful hearts that express themselves in love and obedience, sacrifice is empty; indeed, it is unwelcome.

Jesus cited this same passage from Hosea on another occasion, when the Pharisees rebuked Him for associating with “sinners” (Matthew 9:13). That may have been beneath their dignity, but not His; out of love He came to save such people.

What is the lesson? It is important to be careful about worshiping God as He directed: the right time, the right activities, etc. True worship requires that (John 4:23-24). But let us not forget that the first requirement of acceptable worship is a right heart, one that cares about God’s will and reflects His mercy on a day-to-day basis. Careful worship does not make up for careless living. “First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:24). ■

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everything. Our “ownership” is but a stewardship of things entrusted to us during our lifetimes. As creator, God has the right to impose His will on creation. We are all subject to that will, regardless of whether we consent to it.

Genesis 1:1 provides the framework for life. It explains how we got here and implies our purpose. In the Preacher’s words, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth...” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	John Baucom	Howard Moore	Chad Brock
SONG LEADER	Paul Richmond	John Baucom	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Steven Turner	Mark Clifton	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Bruce Williams	Bruce Williams	
CUP	David Gray	David Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	William Lefort		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Brian Wilson
CLOSING PRAYER	Don Rapp	Gary Hagler	Hunter Lee