


## INTRODUCTION

In my previous class—*Last Things*—we examined and revealed the *end* of this present world. In *this* class—*First Things*—we will examine and reveal the *beginning* of this present world. For one of the more profound revelations to be discovered in such a pursuit is that in the genesis of this world is laid the roots, the insidious tendrils that lead inexorably to the modern world in which we, today, have our being.

We saw previously how this world will end: in an eternal paradise with Father and Son on a new earth for those whose names are written in His book of life, but in fierce judgment for those who have *rejected* Christ, with a verdict consigning them to everlasting fire. But how did they—the unregenerate—and this world reach that end? How did it come about? Sadly, the roots of this earth’s tragic end will be discovered far back in the earliest days of Creation—and even before that. Yet at the same time we discover there the roots of Christ’s victory over death, and the believer’s promise of eternity with Him.

There are, obviously, many differences between the Last Things and the First Things—not least, for us, the former (Last Things) is *prophecy* yet in our future, while the latter (First Things) is *history*. Yet there is a reflective continuity  between the end of all things and the beginning of all things, which reinforces God’s overarching sovereignty over it all. This continuity offers conclusive evidence that the entire saga of God’s relationship to Creation, and those who people it, was planned out in every detail from the beginning. If we think of Creation as a book, it means that God not only *knew* the last sentence of the last chapter before He wrote the first sentence of the first chapter, it means that those two sentences and everything between them has been imagined and crafted by an inventive Genius who wrote the first chapter *because of* how the last chapter ends—and vice versa.

So we must broaden our perception of God’s Creation to encompass not just how the world began, but how it will ultimately need to end. It is *all* part of His Creation; it is *all* part of His genius.

In many respects the very First Things are a mirror image of the very Last Things:

- The eternal state of the Godhead before time began, along with the pristine state of the earliest days in Eden, are reflected in the pristine eternal state of God with man at the end of all things.

**“reflective continuity”**

This is revealed in the Hebrew text itself. For example, the word translated “the beginning” (*resit*) is the semantic antipode (exact opposite) of *ahrit* (the end times). This follows a fundamental principle in biblical eschatology that “the last things are like the first things” (Scaillhmer).

- In between is what is termed “the first things” in Revelation 21:4. In God’s economy, just as the New Jerusalem is descending toward the New Earth, He declares the end of the first things with, “The first things have passed away.” God’s scope is always larger than our own; according to Him, the entire tapestry of Creation and man on earth comprises the “first things,” in contrast to the “last things” of the eternal state. ❏
- In the Garden, in the beginning, man dwells in blissful communion with his Maker—just as he will in the final eternal state.
- The central “tree of life” in the perfect dwelling place of the Garden will also be central to the eternal perfection of the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:1-2).
- In the Garden sin and evil are introduced into the earth; in the final moments of this old earth sin and evil will be forever eradicated (Genesis 3:6; Revelation 20:11-15).
- This earth is created for the first time in Genesis; it will be created again—not *recreated* or *renewed*, for there will be no similarity between the two—at the end of the Revelation.
- In Genesis all mankind but the family of Noah will be destroyed because of its sin, and the world will be remade and reconfigured by the Flood. In Revelation the old earth will be instantly destroyed because of its corruption by man, and a new earth created to replace it.
- In their new state of depravity, Adam and Eve were judged by God and expelled from their paradise. In the final days of this earth Christ will judge all of mankind whose names are not recorded in the book of life, and they will be consigned to eternal torment in the lake of fire (Genesis 3:22-24; Revelation 20:11-15).
- The prophet Jeremiah employs the language of Creation (from Genesis 1:2) to describe the eschatological effects of Yahweh’s wrath (Jeremiah 4:23-26).

The creator *Elohim* (“God”) of v1 is, in a later passage (v2:4), identified as the same with *Yahweh* (“...the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God [*Yahweh Elohim*] made earth and heaven”). They are one and the same. ❏

An essential prerequisite for a study of the First Things is for the teacher and student to “get their mind right”—to lock in a heavenly perspective, a cosmic perception of God and His Creation. That vantage point begins—*just* begins—by looking out one’s window and accepting and confessing that everything we see and experience even today has its genesis—its beginning—in the God of heaven—*everything* was and is created by God.

### “first things”

Thus this study could rightly be called the *beginning* of the “first things.”

### But note,

In this study, just as in the previous, the members of the triune Godhead are essentially inseparable. When I use the term “God,” in almost every instance I am referring to the Godhead—especially God the Father and God the Son. If I am speaking of just one I will make that clear by their individual references, as in “Father God” or “Yahweh,” “Christ” or “Son of God,” and “Holy Spirit.” Scripture is clear that God the Father (Yahweh) and God the Son were both active in Creation (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15-20).

That, however, is just the paltry, grossly limited scope of our human eyesight. This globe was created by Him; the planets that share our solar system were created by Him; the universe beyond, extending to its furthest reaches—*everything*—was first imagined, then spoken into existence by God. This means that everything at its inception was created by God from nothing else (usually referred to by the Latin, *creatio ex nihilo* (cree-AH-tee-oh ex-NEE-hee-lo): “creation from nothing”). Just as God Himself is self-existent, whatever He creates depends on nothing beyond Himself. With only a few notable exceptions, He has spoken it all into existence out of His own supernatural, creative genius and nothing else. 📌

But we have already leapt far ahead of ourselves. For, a study of the first things must begin *before* Creation, before Genesis 1:1, before time itself.

#### BEFORE

Here, as is so often the case in God’s word, our human vocabulary and grammar fail us in describing God and His ways. The words “genesis,” “beginning,” and “creation” all refer to the starting point for *man*—not God. But we must find a way to describe—or at least imagine—what was before Creation. Even that word “before” fails us, for “before” is a word of time, and prior to Creation there was no time (because the things by which we “*tell* time”—sun, moon, stars, day, night—did not yet exist); time was created along with everything else. Nonetheless, humanly speaking we have no better way to speak of what was “before” creation than by employing that inadequate word, “before.” What can we glean from God’s word about the state of things—specifically, the Godhead and heaven—before the universe was created? We find a clue to its physicality (or lack thereof) in The Revelation, in its description of the setting for the great white throne judgment.

#### **Read Revelation 20:11.**

In the closing days of the Millennium Christ Jesus both begins and ends the final act of rebellion by Satan and his armies by calling down fire from heaven to consume them. Almost immediately John sees Christ on his glowing, pure-white throne sitting not in Jerusalem, but somewhere in empty “space” (even *that* word is a misnomer) disengaged from all temporal or heavenly foundations: a throne and a King “from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.”

#### **“exceptions”**

e.g., man and woman (Genesis 2:7), and “every beast of the field and every bird of the sky” (Genesis 2:19).

What we have before us in v11 is the precise moment after the earth and universe have been destroyed—but before the new earth and new heaven have been created. Around the throne of Christ there is nothing—*nothing*. All have “fled away.” In this moment there is Christ upon His throne, surrounded by millions of resurrected, unregenerate dead—and absolutely nothing else. In our limited vernacular we would say that Christ on His throne is “floating in space”—except space has just been destroyed. There *is* no space, no universe, no planets or stars: just nothingness.

That imagery is about as close as we can get to imagining what it was like for the Godhead “before” Creation. What was there? God. Period. Just God—the triunity of the Godhead dwelling in itself.

We might rightly raise the question, then: Was there a *heaven* before the universe was created—that is, did God have a specific, set-aside dwelling place—in 2 Chronicles called “His holy dwelling place” (30:27)—in eternity past? I am not aware of any passage that tells us outright yes or no, but the evidence would seem to indicate that there was. Turn please to Job 1. In v6 we read,

**Now it was the day that the sons of God came to stand before Yahweh, and Satan also came among them.**

That phrase “sons of God” (*bene ha-elohim*) refers to the members of the court surrounding the throne of Yahweh. We could generalize it (as does the NIV) as “angels,” but the word is indeed “sons,” here referring to several kinds of angelic beings comprised of seraphim, the four living creatures (Revelation 7:11), cherubim, archangels as well as more common angels. In this moment, chronicled during the lifetime of Job, we can add to that congregation Satan—who has, by now, fallen, yet still retains access to the precincts of God’s throne. 📖 Later in the book of Job, when Yahweh angrily responds to all the whining and sophistry of Job and his chums, we see the “sons of God” mentioned again—this time at the moment of Creation.

### **Read Job 38:4-7.**

We can only take this to mean that the God-created angelic beings were also in residence at the time of Creation. And if, as in Job 1 and 2, they were referred to as “sons of God” because of their proximity to and service to the throne, then that means there *was* a throne in place. And we could rightly extend this to include the heavenly tabernacle, or temple, which would have housed the chair and dais of God’s throne.

### **“fallen Satan”**

See Chart #16 from my *Last Things* study.

So it is logical to assume that God's dwelling place, heaven, is as timeless and eternal as He. But note: the existence of a pre-Creation heaven has no bearing on the eternal (i.e., without beginning) emptiness in which Creation will take place, for God's dwelling, though material and tangible, exists outside the time and dimensions of Creation. His Creation, that which is recorded in Genesis, does not contain God's dwelling place; one cannot strap into a spaceship and travel to the end of the universe (if there even is an end) to reach heaven. It is not there; it does not dwell on our plane.

We conclude from this that before the creation of our world the only thing in existence was God's dwelling place, which we name "heaven." *That* heaven existed (and still exists) outside the plane of this created universe. Thus, outside of God's dwelling place there was only nothingness.

*What more does His word tell us about God before time?*

**First**, the members of the Godhead were unified in love and joy for and with each other. At the beginning of John's gospel we are told that Christ "the Word" was *with* God, but more than that He *was* God (John 1:1). We need no more than that to marvel at the holy mystery of the Godhead: its members are both *with* each other—and they *are* each other; Christ the Son is fully God, yet at the same time subservient to Father God (John 14:31; Hebrews 5:8).

**Second**, we know that this was far more than just *physical* proximity. Later in John's gospel—his Chapter Seventeen is a treasure trove of information about the relationship between Father and Son—we learn of the type of relationship the members of the Godhead had with each other; it was one of shared glory and love.

**"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." John 17:5**

This was and is a bond not just of mutual glory, but mutual *love*.

**Read John 17:22-26.**

**Third**, God is without beginning.

**Before the mountains were born  
Or You brought forth the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Psalm 90:2  
(written by Moses)**

**"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.  
His goings forth are from everlasting,  
From the ancient days." Micah 5:2**

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” John 8:58

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Genesis 1:2

Our minds rebel against this, for in our world *everything* has a beginning. Every oak began as an acorn, every bird began as an egg, every human being began as a twinkle in his father’s eye. Before this world was, it was not. But God is the exception: God—consisting of Father, Son, Spirit—always has been. The Levites who led the confession and worship of Israel in the day of Ezra and Nehemiah seem to suggest that there was a point in eternity past when there was, literally, just God, who then subsequently created “the heaven of heavens” as well as the angels (see also Psalm 148:2-5, Colossians 1:16).

### **Read Nehemiah 9:6.**

**Fourth**, the love expressed within the Godhead was nonetheless not a selfish, self-contained or exclusive love, but a love that energized God’s creation of man, with man’s hope of eternal life with his Maker all worked out in eternity past.

**Read Titus 1:1-2.** (literally, “before times eternal”; ESV: “before the ages began”)

Within the sublime mystery of the Godhead we see the three working out all the details of man’s future eternal life with God through the atonement of Christ. Were they discussing? debating? arguing? negotiating? We cannot say, for They are spirit-kind with all the qualities and attributes of deity; it is almost certain that were we to eavesdrop on Their “discussion” we would not understand one word of it—if it were even audible to human ears.

Thus, before anything was created, all the details of that Creation were worked out—everything, from beginning to end, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, the name of every human being who would ever live and whether or not they would be claimed for Christ, as the apostle Paul explained to the Ephesians:

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6**

**Fifth**, the Godhead made the astounding decision that when They *did* create man, he would be made in Their “image.”

**Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Genesis 1:26**

God could have made man as just another animal insensibly grazing Eden’s pasture; He could have made him in the likeness of an over-ripe turnip. Instead man was made in the “image” of God, “according to [Their] likeness.” That is profound beyond words. Man is set apart from every creature made before or after him. He is different, and that difference begins with the image in which he was made: God’s.

**Sixth and finally**, the Godhead made the even *more* astounding decision that man would require external salvation—that if he were to spend eternity in communion with God, someone other than himself would need to supply the necessary regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. This new creation would not—and *could* not—do it on his own; he would require a Savior.

Long before the first word of Creation was uttered, God worked it out that one of Them—the Son—would pay the necessary price for man’s redemption. He—that is, God Himself, in flesh—would be the Lamb slain to pay the penalty for man’s sin.

### **Read 1 Peter 1:17-21.**



The Godhead not only existed, it would seem It was rather busy during the timeless eons before Creation. In our next session we will answer another pressing question: *Why? Why* did God create the universe, the earth, and human beings? *Why?*

### **God’s “preexistence”**

More than one person has typed into a search engine the query, “Did god exist before creation?” And, of course, most evangelicals would answer that query with, “Well, duh.” But if you have been raised in the public school system of the last few decades, being taught that the creation of the universe was just an explosive accident, and that man simply evolved from tadpole-like slime, let us at least be grateful that those asking the question acknowledge the possibility of the existence of God.

# SESSION 1

## Before Everything

### The Last Things Mirrored in the First Things

- The eternal state of the New Earth will be much like the eternal state of the Godhead before time and in the earliest days of Eden.
- In God's economy, just as the New Jerusalem is descending toward the New Earth, He declares the end of the first things with, "The first things have passed away" **Revelation 22:1**. God's scope is always larger than our own; according to Him, the entire tapestry of Creation and man on earth comprises the "first things," in contrast to the "last things" of the eternal state.
- The tree of life plays a central role in both the Garden and the New Jerusalem (**Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:1-2**).
- In the Garden sin was introduced into the first earth; in its final moments the first earth with its corruption will be forever removed (**Genesis 3:6; Revelation 20:11-15**).
- This earth was created in Genesis; the New Earth will be created at the end of the Revelation.
- Adam and Eve were judged by God and expelled from the Garden; in the final days of this earth all the unregenerate—those who inherited and retained Adam's sin will be judged and sent to the Lake of Fire (**Genesis 3:22-24; Revelation 20:11-15**).
- The prophet Jeremiah uses the language of Creation (from **Genesis 1:2**) to describe the end-times effects of Yahweh's wrath (**Jeremiah 4:23-26**).

Scripture is clear that God the Father (Yahweh) and God the Son were both active in Creation (**Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15-20**).

### "Before"

- We discover a clue to the state of things prior to Creation in **Revelation 20:11**.

### Was there a Heaven (God's dwelling place) before Creation?

- See **Job 1:6 and Job 38:4-7**.

### What does His word tell us about God Before Time?

1. The Godhead was unified (**John 1:1; John 5:19, 30**).
2. They enjoyed mutual love, joy, and glory (**John 17:5, 22-26**).
3. God is without beginning (**Psalms 90:2; Micah 5:2; John 8:58; Genesis 1:2; see also see also Psalm 148:2-5, Colossians 1:16 and Nehemiah 9:6**).
4. The Godhead's mutual love was an unselfish love (**Titus 1:1-2** [*literally, "before times eternal"; ESV: "before the ages began"*]; see also **Ephesians 1:3-6**).
5. The Godhead decided it would make man in Their "image" (**Genesis 1:26**).
6. The Godhead made the even more astounding decision that man would require external salvation (**1 Peter 1:17-21**).

For complete notes and audios for each session, go to [DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/](http://DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/)





## *First Things Text Outline*

1:1 – 2:1	Creation of the Universe and Earth
2:2-3	Creation of the Sabbath
2:4-14	More details on earth's creation, including Eden's garden and the first man
2:15-17	Restrictions
2:18-23	A helper created: the first woman
2:24-25	Marriage created
<b>The Fall</b>	
3:1-5	The Temptation (a lie)
3:6	The Sin (the fall)
3:7-8	The result of the sin (shame)
3:9-13	Dissembling and blame-shifting ("it's not my fault!")
3:14-19	Cosmic Judgment for the serpent, the woman, and the man
3:20-24	Care mixed with banishment
<b>Generations</b>	
4:1-16	Cain and Abel: the first homicide
4:17-24	Cain's descendants: from Enoch to Lamech
4:25 – 5:32	The Generations of Adam: from Seth to Noah's sons
6:1-4	The Nephilim and the Daughters of men
6:5-8	Yahweh regrets creating man and animals
6:9-10	The Generations of Noah
<b>The Flood</b>	
6:11 – 7:4	God's instructions and the first covenant with Noah (6:18)
7:5-16	Noah's Obedience
7:17-24	The flood prevails
8:1-14	The earth dries
8:15-19	The ark empties
8:20-22	Noah worships and Yahweh responds with a promise
9:1-7	Three changes after the flood:
	animals will now fear man
	man may now be carnivorous
	murder now requires the death of the murderer

## *First Things Text Outline*

9:8-17	God's second covenant with Noah
9:18-29	Noah's three sons and, after 950 years, Noah dies
<b>Generations</b>	
10:1-32	The descendants of Noah's sons and where they settled (the families disperse)
<b>Babel</b>	
11:1-9	The Tower of Babel is built; Yahweh responds by giving each nation its own tongue, and scatters them over the entire earth