

Chapter 1

Almighty Creator

Determined to build an understanding of God upon what the Scripture reveals, let's start with the first verse of the Bible:

*In the beginning God created the heavens
and the earth.* (Gen. 1:1)

From this verse we can know that God is the Creator.

We also can conclude that God was around before this world existed. He pre-existed the heavens and Earth. Many other verses confirm this and even assure us that God is eternal, that is, He always was and always will be (i.e., Gen. 21:33; Ps. 41:13, 90:2; Is. 40:28).

I wonder what God was doing in eternity past. Was He creating other worlds or thinking about us?

The Bible tells us little to nothing about God's actions or state before He created this world. Many Church leaders have warned of the futility of such conjecture. Augustine, Luther, and Calvin each made reference to a well-known statement whose origin is unknown: "God was preparing hell for those who pry too deep." What was He doing? We do not know. Our written revelation of God starts: "*In the beginning...*"

The second verse in the Bible tells us:

...the Spirit of God was moving over the

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surface of the waters. (Gen. 1:2)

This reveals an aspect of God called the Spirit, and that Spirit can move in space. Often people envision God filling the whole universe at every moment. Perhaps other Bible verses will lead us to that conclusion as we continue; however, here we must note that God's Spirit can be in a certain location in relation to Earth.

And He can move about.

A more observant Bible student may be able to identify some additional facts about God from these beginning verses, but to me, these are the ones that seem the most obvious—undeniable.

The next facts are revealed as God creates things by speaking them into existence.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Gen. 1:3)

He speaks! And when God speaks, things come into existence: light, stars, plants, animals....

God is powerful!

The power of God is an aspect of His nature which is prominent throughout Scripture. He created the universe with His spoken Word, destroyed humanity (except Noah and his family) with a flood, repeatedly rescued the Hebrew people from their enemies, worked miracles through Jesus, resurrected His Son, and, in the end, will consummate all things in Christ Jesus.

To help us understand the power of God, it is

helpful to examine the related name by which He is known: *El Shaddai*, which commonly is translated as “God, the Almighty One.”

To understand this name for God, it is important to know that Hebrew words are closely tied with the function which is being communicated. The term *El* refers to God, but it would be misleading to interpret *Shaddai* as “the Omnipotent One,” because that expression is too impersonal. In Genesis 17:1, we read about God appearing to Abraham and declaring that He is *El Shaddai*. In that context, God was communicating to Abraham in a very personal way. The root, *Shad*, is associated with the Hebrew word for breast, and therefore, *Shaddai* may be interpreted as “the Abundantly-Breasted One.” Hebrew scholars also would be comfortable interpreting *El Shaddai* as “God, the All-Sufficient One.” The point is that in order to translate Hebrew words accurately, careful attention must be given to function and context. If we were to interpret *El Shaddai* as “God, the Omnipotent One,” we would be saying something that the Hebrew is not actually saying. The word *omnipotent* does not communicate too much, but rather it communicates too little. It does not convey God’s heart for people. God was not interested in revealing that He is the “All-Powerful One.” He was interested in making Himself known to Abraham—and us—as Provider, Shelter, Giver, Life, and all we need.

As we continue, I will use the word “Almighty” as a characteristic of God, but I hope you will keep in mind the relational aspect that was communicated in the Hebrew language.*

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To this point in our study we can state that God is the Creator and He is eternal. There is a Spirit aspect of His nature which can move about over Earth. He speaks, and when He speaks, things come into existence. God is powerful and almighty!

* For a different perspective, yet enlightening discussion on the difference between “Almighty” and “Omnipotent” see John Sanders, *The God Who Risks* (Downers Grove, IL, 1998), p. 188-194.