SERIES INTRODUCTION

Tonight I would like to begin a series of messages on “The Greatest Chapters In The Bible.”

In the original manuscripts of both the Old and New Testaments there were no chapters or verses. Each book was written continuously from beginning to end with no breaks or divisions.

It wasn't until the year 1227 that the Bible was divided into chapters by a man named Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris and later he became the Archbishop of Canterbury. Verses were not added for another 300 years in 1551 by French printer Robert Stephanus.

The first Bible to be published with chapters and verses was in 1555, and the first English language Bible with chapters and verses was printed five years later in 1560.

We must understand that the chapter and verse divisions were added by man for the convenience of locating certain passages and for quotation purposes. I think all of us would agree that it is a whole lot easier to find certain statements and accounts in the scriptures with chapters and verses than without them.
In all there are **1,189 chapters in the Bible**....... **929** in the Old Testament....... **260** in the New Testament.

Now that's a lot of chapters isn't it? So how do we determine which chapters qualify as “The Greatest Chapters in The Bible?”

Well let me just say this before we begin this series. Every chapter in the Bible is equally important because each chapter is inseparably woven together with the chapter before it and after it like a beautiful tapestry. **But there are some chapters that seem to stand out above the others because of their content or their beauty.**

I also want to say this. Because we are covering an entire chapter in each of the messages in this series, time will only permit us to focus on the highlights of each of these chapters rather than all the specific details. *It's kind of like standing on top of a mountain. You can't observe every nook and crevice of the mountain, but you can look at its peaks and still appreciate its magnificent beauty.*

Having said that, let's turn our thoughts now to our first great chapter in the Bible and that is **GENESIS CHAPTER ONE.**

What is it that qualifies **Genesis 1** as one of the **Greatest Chapters of The Bible?** Perhaps it's because this chapter answers our most fundamental questions about life such as: “Who am I?” “How did I get here?” And “Why am I here?” But even more importantly, **Genesis 1** introduces us to “Our Maker.”
TRANSITION TO GENESIS CHAPTER ONE

There are three key points I would like to highlight in this Great Chapter of The Bible:

I. The Creator (v.1)
II. The Creation (vs. 2-25)
III. The Crowning Glory (vs. 26-28)

First of all let's look at......

I. The **CREATOR** (v.1)

v.1a “In the beginning **GOD** created the heavens and the earth.”

Canon Lidden once wrote......

When man looks out from himself upon the wonderful home in which he is placed, upon the various orders of living things around him, upon the solid earth which he treads, upon the heavens into which he gazes, when he surveys the mechanism of his own body, he must answer the question, How and why did this vast system of being come to be? This question is answered by the first verse in the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (edited for clarity)

1. Pay close attention to the first four words of verse 1.....

   “In the beginning **GOD**” (repeat)

2. The Bible doesn't start out trying to prove the existence of **GOD**. It begins with a bold declaration of truth: “In the beginning **GOD**!” Those four words tell us “God IS!”..... “God EXISTS!” “God is REAL!” “In the beginning **GOD**!”
3. There is nothing vague......or confusing......or difficult to understand about those words; in fact it is so simple that even a child can understand.

4. Those four simple words immediately dismisses the atheist's belief that there is NO God. Psalm 14:1 says, “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” Those four simple words also dismisses the belief of every false religion that teachers there are MANY Gods.

5. The Hebrew name that Moses used for GOD in this verse and throughout this first chapter is the name Elohim........"El" meaning “God” and “ohlm” (oh-heem) meaning “plural.” That is a unique, exclusive name that is only used for the God of the Bible. He is the “plural God”.....the “Triune” God.......”In the beginning GOD the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth.”

6. This verse tells us that GOD existed before anything was created and that ALL LIFE BEGINS WITH GOD.

TIME......HISTORY......THE UNIVERSE......SPACE........THE WORLD......ANIMAL LIFE.....PLANT LIFE.....HUMAN LIFE.... everything ABOVE US.......everything AROUND US......and everything BELOW US begins with GOD.

7. GOD has literally “left His fingerprints” all over His creation.

Psalm 19:1 (NIV) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
8. It is here, in the very first verse of the Bible that true faith begins.

**Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV)**  By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

**Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)**  But without faith it is impossible to please Him, **for he who comes to God must believe that He is**, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

9. You see, if you believe the very first verse of the Bible you won't have any problem believing the rest of God's word.

Faith requires us to believe that **every created thing demands that there be a Creator and that Creator is God.....Elohim......God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.**

Next we turn our thoughts to......

II. **The CREATION** (vs. 2-31)

1. Beginning with **verse 2** all the way to **the end of the chapter** we find the account of **the Creation**. Time does not permit us to read this lengthy account, so let me make just a few key points if I may.

2. Notice the **pre-creation condition** of the earth in **verse 2**......

   “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.”
3. That tells us the world was in absolute **chaos** before the creation. The earth was **an empty, barren wasteland**. It was **dark**. It was **devoid of all beauty**. The earth was literally **a place of desolate ruin**.

4. But notice in the midst of all this chaos, all of this emptiness, **the Spirit of God** is already at work. The latter part of **verse 2** says, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

   **The Spirit of God hovering over the waters** was the very first act of God in preparing this planet to become inhabitable by man and beasts.

5. Now as we follow the creation account we learn three very important truths.

   **Truth #1: God created the world in a **POWERFUL** manner.**

   GOD “spoke” creation into existence by **the power of His WORD**. Please follow along with me

   **v. 3**  **Then God said**, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

   **v. 6**  **Then God said**, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

   **v.9**  **Then God said**, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

   **v.11**  **Then God said**, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so.
vs. 14, 15 *Then God said*, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; 

*and it was so.*

v. 20 *Then God said*, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.”

v. 24 *Then God said*, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; 

*and it was so.*

v. 26 *Then God said*, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

**GOD SPOKE........”AND IT WAS SO!”** Everything GOD speaks happens!

**PSALM 33:9 (NKJV)** For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

May we have a greater appreciation of just how powerful and awesome is our GOD that He could speak creation into existence.

**Truth #2: God created the world in an ORDERLY manner.**

GOD took **nothing** and turned it into **something.**
GOD took **disorder** and turned it into **order.**
GOD took **emptiness** and turned it into **fullness.**

**ONLY GOD CAN DO THAT!!!**
Illustration: If you have ever put together one of those thousand piece jigsaw puzzles probably the first thought you had when you dumped all those pieces out of the box was “where do I even begin?”

When GOD looked at all of that emptiness, and chaos, and disorder of the earth He didn’t scratch His head and say, “Where do I even begin?” I Corinthians 14:33 tells us “God is not a God of disorder.” God has a very systematic, orderly way of doing things. And this is certainly seen in this creation account in Genesis 1.

Remember the earth was “without form, and void, and covered in darkness.” (v.2) In that condition the earth was uninhabitable for all life forms, especially man. So the first thing God did was to give form and shape to the world. He did this by a process of separating and dividing to form natural boundaries and borders to make the earth suitable for man.

* Man could not survive in a world of complete darkness so on DAY 1 God created “light.” And He separated the light from the darkness. For many centuries, Bible scholars and skeptics alike have debated over what “the light” was in Genesis 1:3 because the celestial lights of the sun, moon, and stars were not created until the fourth day. The simple answer is: we don't know! God chose not to reveal the nature or the source of “the light” in verse 3 and we just need to leave it at that.

* Man also could not survive in a world without oxygen so on DAY 2 God separated the EARTH from SPACE to create an atmosphere whereby man and animals could breathe.

* Man also could not survive in water, because he has no gills or scales like aquatic animals. And so on DAY 3 God separated the LAND from the SEA thus giving man a place to live. Man also could not survive without food, so on DAY 3 God created fruits and vegetables as a food source for man and animals.
* Then on **DAY 4**, as I mentioned a moment ago, **GOD created the sun, moon, and stars.** God created these celestial bodies for many reasons: **To separate the day from the night,** for **SIGNS** to farmers and sailors and astronomers, **to MARK TIME** such as seasons, days, and years; and of course **He gave us the SUN to keep us warm.**

* Then on **DAYS 5 and 6,** **God created all the birds of the air,** all the creatures of the sea, and **all the beasts of the earth.** We already learned that on **DAY 3 God created fruits and vegetables as a food source for man and beasts.** Did God create animals to also be a food source for man? Yes He did! **Genesis 9:3**

> “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.”

Now here is my point. There was a reason why **GOD created the world in the order He did.** Man could not live in darkness, so God created light. Man could not live without oxygen so God created an atmosphere man could live in. Man could not live in water, so **GOD created land.** Man could not live without food, so **GOD created fruits, and vegetables, and meat sources.**

**GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN A POWERFUL MANNER.** (He spoke it into existence)

**GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN AN ORDERLY MANNER** (to make the earth inhabitable for man and beasts)

Now here is.......
TRUTH #3: God created the world in a PERFECT manner.

v. 10 tells us that on the second day after God had separated the waters from the dry land “He saw that it was good.”

v. 13 tells us that on the third day after God created the fruit and vegetable bearing plants “He saw that it was good.”

v. 18 tells us that on the fourth day after God created the sun, moon, and stars “He saw that it was good.”

v. 21 tells us that on the fifth day after God created the aquatic animals that live in water and the birds of the air “He saw that it was good.”

v. 25 tells us that on the sixth day after God created all the beasts of the field and animals that live on dry land, “He saw that it was good.”

v. 31 tells us that at the end of the sixth day after God had completed His creation “He saw that everything He had made was VERY GOOD.”

Everything was perfect. There were no mistakes or flaws. And most importantly God's creation was not “tainted by sin.” Everything was exactly as God intended for it to be.

Well we have looked at The CREATOR. And we have looked at The CREATION.

Thirdly let's look at......
III. The CROWNING GLORY (vs. 26-28)

1. We have all heard of “saving the best til last.” That is what GOD did in His creation. Look at verses 26-28.

**GENESIS 1:26-28 (NKJV)**

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, 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.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

2. I could preach an entire sermon just on these three verses, but time doesn't permit us to linger very long here, so let me just say this.

3. We are the crowning glory of GOD’S CREATION. We are uniquely different from the rest of His creation.

Remember everything else GOD created He spoke into existence with the words, “Let there be.” But when it came to creating man, God said “Let us make man.” Everything else God created with a word, a command........but man He created with His hands. **Genesis 2:7 (NKJV)** And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
We are also uniquely different from the rest of God's creation in that we have been created in the IMAGE of GOD. Notice God says, “Let US make man in OUR Image.” Notice He is speaking in “plural.” GOD is one being with three very distinct parts: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, you and I have three very distinct parts: We have a BODY, a SOUL, and a SPIRIT. If we only had a body we would be no different than the animals. But the fact that God created us with a soul and a spirit makes us uniquely different than the animals.

The soul is the seat of the will, the character, the intellect, the thoughts, and the emotions. The soul allows us to be self-conscious or self-aware.

The spirit on the other hand allows us to be God conscious. Every man and woman who is born into this world is dead spiritually until the Holy Spirit awakens his or her spirit to reach out to God in faith. The spirit is that part of us that recognizes sin in our life and our need for a savior. An animal does not have that capacity.

4. And so after GOD created man on the sixth day, GOD saw everything that He had made and that it was very good!
As we bring this first message in our series on *The Greatest Chapters In The Bible* to a close, let me just make a couple of points of application.

The image of the earth being *without form, and void, and dark* before God brought it alive with creation is also true of the man or woman who does not know GOD. If a man does not have GOD in his life he is *empty, and void, and full of darkness.* Without GOD a man has *no purpose.....no meaning.....and no life.* And just as it was on the very first day of creation, it is only when *the Holy Spirit of God comes into our life* that we become a “new creation.”

And one other thought I want to leave you with tonight is this. *If you believe that GOD IS BIG ENOUGH AND GREAT ENOUGH to create the universe, don't you also believe you can trust Him with every detail of your life?*