



CHAPTER 1

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

Read Genesis 1:1

Genesis is a Greek word. It means *beginnings*. Although the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, there was a Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, translated about 280 to 200 BC. In this work, the first book is called Genesis.

As a Greek word, elements of Genesis appear in English words, especially technical words. Thus, *genetics* is a study of species' origins. We also see the word in such English words as *generation*, and *genealogy*.

Many people will start to read the Bible from Genesis, because it is the first book. If we made no consideration of any studies outside the Bible, we would expect Genesis to lay down the foundations for beliefs, history, and doctrine in the rest of the Bible. It is my contention that it is impossible to understand the rest of the Bible while ignoring this foundational book.

Yet there are many scholars today who attempt to explain away the Book of Genesis. It is described by many as a myth, as legend, as moral teaching, as allegory, or as literature or poetry. Indeed, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that most evangelical scholars have given up on a literal, six 24-hour period creation of the world less than ten thousand years ago, in favor of theories that attempt to harmonize millions of years into the Genesis account. It will be one of the purposes of this study to challenge such aberrations of biblical interpretation.

I sometimes spend time in Christian bookshops, thumbing through the initial few pages of books, to see what position on the creation account is taken by authors. So that there is no confusion, let me set out my belief on this matter right now. This might not be the scholarly way of treating an argument. Some of you want me to examine all sides of the argument first, then tentatively come down off the fence. I believe that the position I take is inherently sound and have not been afraid to argue the issues elsewhere in this study. But for now, let's make a statement, so that those of you scanning the first couple of pages can find what you want to see.

I believe the entire Bible to be the Word of God, authoritative, sufficient, complete, and inerrant. In this, I include the Book of Genesis. I take the Bible at face value. Since the Bible says that God created the world in just six days and rested on the seventh, that is what I believe. I accept that these days were literally 24-hour periods of time. I believe that there are few, if any, gaps in the genealogies — I can accept none in the genealogies of Genesis 5 or 1 Chronicles 1. Thus, I believe the world to be *young*, compared to the millions and billions of years usually quoted. I take the earth to be about 6,000 years old.

Some wish to stretch the age to about ten thousand years, but I still think 6,000 is far more likely. Despite describing this as a *young-earth* position, I personally think that 6,000 years is a very long time and adequately explains verses in the Bible which refer to the earth as ancient. Six thousand years is pretty ancient to me. I do not accept pseudo-creationist

theories, therefore, such as progressive creationism, day-age theory, the gap theory, theistic evolution, or any other idea that waters down a belief in the literal, historical truth of Genesis.

There! I've said it all. I hope you will accept that these ideas are not some sort of blind faith. I will return to every one of those statements and justify them, biblically, scientifically, or both.

The question in a study such as this is always, "Where shall we start our study?" I have been speaking and writing on creationism for well over 20 years. I used to start by tackling the science, showing that evolution is wrong. More recently, I have come to the view that the main problem in today's church is a lack of belief in the Bible itself, so I now tend to start from the Bible's account and build the argument from there. That is why I have written this book in biblical order, examining Genesis chapters 1 to 11, passage by passage.

But how does Genesis itself begin the account? "In the beginning, God. . . ." This powerful set of four words tells us:

- God is central to everything.
- God was before everything.
- Everything had a beginning.
- God was there before that beginning.
- God is the key subject matter of the universe.

We can say nothing about anything in the Bible without reference to God. But this phrase goes further. It declares that we can say nothing about anything, anywhere without reference to God.

Thomas Aquinas argued a two-story model of the universe. This separation can be more fully expressed in the following example, taken from a work by F.A. Schaeffer.¹

<u>Grace</u> Nature	
Grace, the higher	<i>God the Creator</i> ; heaven and heavenly things; the unseen and its influence on the earth; <i>unity</i> , or universals or absolutes which give existence and morals meaning
Nature, the lower	<i>The created</i> ; earth and earthly things; the visible and what happens normally in the cause-and-effect universe; what man as man does on the earth; <i>diversity</i> , or individual things, the particulars, or the individual acts of man

It is no exaggeration to say that Aquinas's model of the universe has had a profound and overwhelming influence on Western thought, right up to the present day. The result of this is to divorce God from His creation. It relegates all Western scientific thought to the lower story. It is possible that some academics will allow us the study of the spiritual, but these studies are confined to the upper story, and are seen to have no relevance to the world in which we live.

If modern scientific thinking allows for a god at all, it is a lower-story god. C.S. Lewis describes this type of god — and you thought he only wrote books about lions, witches, and wardrobes! Lewis describes the difference between Nature and Supernature in his book, *Miracles*, in which he describes a type of neo-Aquinianism.

Naturalism, without ceasing to be itself, could admit a certain kind of God. The great interlocking event called Nature might be

such as to produce at some stage a great cosmic consciousness, an indwelling “God” arising from the whole process as human mind arises (according to the Naturalists) from human organisms. A Naturalist would not object to that sort of God. The reason is this. Such a God would not stand outside Nature or the total system, would not be existing “on his own.”²

This type of god would be acceptable to physicists, like Frank Tipler. Tipler developed the so-called *anthropic principle*, in which he describes how he believes the universe could only have evolved along a path, which leads to the way it is now. Any other outcome would have been impossible. Although this is not a philosophy that I can embrace, convinced as I am in the truth of God’s Word, it is interesting that this new cosmology puts man back at the center of the universe, from which he was so rudely removed. Tipler argues that there must be a convergence point for all space, time, and mass, which he calls the *omega point*. This omega point, once conceived in this way, then takes on the attributes of God. He says, “The logically necessary histories collectively comprising the whole of reality can be regarded as ‘emanating’ from the Omega Point in his/her transcendence.”³

The Bible sets itself against the centuries of Aquinian teaching in these first four powerful words, “In the beginning, God. . . .” The Bible knows nothing of a two-story separation. Such a model is found nowhere in Scripture; it is rather the application of Greek thought to theology which has allowed such thinking to predominate.

There are too many pastors and teachers today who tell us that we just need to trust in Jesus — it doesn’t matter what we believe about Genesis. But the truth of the Bible stands or falls on these first four words. Either we believe God was there in the beginning, or we don’t. The early chapters of Genesis touch on real science. There are those today who believe that science has disproved the Bible. That is because of modern theories which are opposed to what the beginning of the Bible says. But

the Bible doesn't start to argue back. It is rightly said that the Bible is not a scientific textbook. After all, textbooks are re-written frequently. The Bible remains the same, because it is God's Word to the world. The Bible is not meant to be the book that argues for the existence of God — that's our job. The Bible is rather the book through which we observe and interpret the world. We are meant to start from the Bible. Once we make this start, we observe that our scientific facts, as we get to learn them, fall into place.

After all, what is the Bible's great statement about the existence, or otherwise, of God?

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works. There is none who does good (Ps. 14:1).

The word translated as "fool" does not carry quite the same meaning as the English. It refers to someone who is *morally* deficient, as noted by the phrase, "They are corrupt." There is, therefore, a *moral* wisdom about believing in God.

That is why the Bible challenges us to believe in God in its first four words. At stake here is our entire belief system. If we don't believe in the truth of the Book of Genesis, then there is no basis for our belief in the *morality* taught by the Bible. The Ten Commandments become a waste of time, as does our belief in the Resurrection. And without our belief in the Resurrection, then, in Paul's words, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

These four words — "In the beginning, God" — demonstrate to us the fact of God's existence and the futility of believing otherwise. Moreover, they state that God was there "in the beginning," so He was there before the creation of the world. This takes Him outside nature, and makes Him transcendent, as well as immortal. The four words tell us that everything else, other than God, had a beginning and that God

was the Creator of everything else. There was thus a beginning to time itself.

It is difficult to understand a world without time, but clever physicists like Stephen Hawking have tried to get us to do so, so there is no reason for Christians to doubt the beginning of time. However, our beginning is not the beginning of the new physics, as espoused by Hawking and others. They believe that the universe began in a big bang. Thus, the universe was once concentrated into one infinitesimally small dot that exploded. Much thought has gone into the mechanism of what matter might be like in such a big bang. Hawking is well known for his “popular” style-book, *A Brief History of Time*, which many have on their bookshelves, but which few have read or even understood. This is a shame, because God wants us to understand the beginning easily. There was no big bang, and no complex equations. What we need to know is, “In the beginning, God. . . .” This is at once a simple and yet profound statement. It is the statement through which the rest of Scripture is to be interpreted.

Endnotes

1. F.A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), p. 55.
2. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan Collins, 1947), p. 12.
3. F.J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), p. 264.