

## IN THE BEGINNING

... did God really do it as Genesis 1 says?

Intro to Genesis

WEFC September 7, 2008

### In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Ten English words in total ... ten words that record an event unobserved by any human eye, yet affect every person eternally ... if they are true.

Science has no disagreement with this statement or those that follow.

These words have been devalued, not by science, but by scientists who make religious judgments; by humanists who refuse to acknowledge God; by scholars and theologians who re-interpret the words mean that which they never were intended to mean.

The words are simple, clear and to the point.

They lay out priceless information that we could never have come to on our own.

As we approach the opening chapters of this first book of the Bible, **Genesis**, as time permits, we will dig into its rich contents.

It explains how things have come to their present state by filling in the gaps of the past.

The first major of the section of the Bible is called the Old Testament ... which explains God's directive and coaching of a nation called Israel.

Genesis 1-11 explains how this nation was came to figure in God's world and answers a number of other important questions that rise in most thinking minds at one point or another.

We could just jump into **Genesis**, but we would soon need to stop and deal with some major questions.

These are PRELIMINARY considerations that to some of us will be boring, but need to be addressed. )So if you look bored I will understand that you really are bored ... ).

The first concerns us because this is something taught in the very schools to which we send our children ... Christian, evangelical colleges where we think they will be taught God's Word.

Here our children have a good chance of hearing something like ...

### PRELIMINARY #1

**“Genesis is myth.”**

When people use the word “myth” in relationship to events or statements in God's Word ...

“Myth” means ...

- the stories may not be historically true, but they teach us something about God, and so we do not get rid of them, because they come with truth “attached” to them.

**Genesis 1-11** is labeled as “myth” is because, essentially, these instructors will say that it does not fit with what we know in science today.

Throughout our study of **Genesis** we will take the text as a true document, historically and scientifically accurate.

## PRELIMINARY # 2

**Handling the many differing opinions on what Genesis says will require the help of our friend – HERMENEUTICS.**

If we dig just a bit and see the comments made on just the first line or two of the Bible, we become rather confused by all the opinions on the statements.

Next Sunday, our Lord permitting, we will come to the word **DAY**. The word is spelled D – A – Y, but there is considerable debate on whether it means a 24 hour period or an indefinite period of time.

Just how are we to understand the words left for us?

In the study of God's Word is a field called **HERMENEUTICS** ... the rules that are used to understand what the Bible says.

Hermeneutics is a good thing, but when its focus becomes blurred or lopsided, then it begins to lose its validity.

JETS 40:1 (March 1997) p. 69-82

### **The Impact Of Postmodern Thinking On Evangelical Hermeneutics**

Robertson McQuilkin And Bradford Mullen

Historically, evangelicals held that God communicated truth through men in such a way that it could be understood and serve as

a divine guide for thought and life. This objective truth was expressed in statements that were to be believed and obeyed by all people. ... If people followed reasonable guidelines for getting at the meaning intended by God and expressed in the text, they could understand objective, unchanging truth.

... Recently some evangelicals have said that the older optimism is naive and unwarranted, that we mortals could never be expected to get at the mind of God with accuracy through a written revelation. The best we can hope for is that the most learned and talented among us, at least, with great effort may be able to join successfully the two horizons of their own consciousness and the Biblical text and spiral upward toward closer approximations of truth, which, gratefully, we still believe exists. We are constantly reminded that the intent of the Bible authors, not to mention the intent of God, is forever out of reach because of the limitations of human language, the blinding effect of preunderstanding, and the cultural encapsulation of the text.

... The evangelical Church has always taken its stand against the inroads of doubt concerning the trustworthiness of the text or its authority for contemporary thought and behavior.

In the middle of the last century when the critics said the Book was purely human, evangelical faith responded: "No, it is **inspired** by God."

Some agreed that it was inspired but not all of it. So evangelical faith added an adjective: "**plenary**." (*absolutely ... completely*)

Doubters agreed that it was fully inspired but only in the ideas, not the words. So evangelical faith replied at the turn of the century: "No, we mean '**verbal**' inspiration. The activity of God in giving the Word extends to the very words."

Later in this century erstwhile evangelicals said, "Yes, it is verbally inspired, but that applies only to what it intends to teach, to theology, not to matters of science and history."

So evangelical faith was then pressed to add an additional qualification: Scripture is **without error ("inerrant")**.

Now we are pressed to add an additional qualification as many among us have begun to say, "Yes, the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative, but it cannot be applied directly to us unless it passes certain tests that we shall formulate."

To this new attack we must formulate a new defense: Scripture itself must set its own limitations on the audience God intends. We may not use external criteria to pick and choose what applies .... Perhaps we need to add a new qualifier: “**normative.**”

**Never before has the authoritative gospel been directed against such an antiauthoritarian spirit.**

... end of article ...

You may not care about HERMENEUTICS this morning, but wait till we disagree on what is said... Then, popping up in the middle of the heated debate will be our good friend.

Remember his name – HERMENEUTICS ... and remember that he does have imposters.

### **PRELIMINARY #3**

We will need to use our heads, but we cannot stop there.

**“Biblical knowledge” is to shape “morality”.**

What we know must shape the way we live.

Morality is knowledge in work clothes.

By the end of our time in **Genesis** we should not just know it says, but we should be changed people ... because its truth has penetrated our behavior.

We should end up being ...

- Far more alert to God and His activity

- People who know who we are and what we are to be doing

- Marriage should become sweeter

- Sin should be identified easier and more often resisted

For that to happen we are going to begin to construct that which today is called a **WORLD VIEW.**

### **PRELIMINARY #4**

**Bit by bit, we will piece together a Biblical WorldView.**

WORLDVIEW wants to know ...

1. **"Who are we?"**

2. **"Why is the world the way it is?"**

*Where does it all come from? Where do we come from?*

This may be the most important question for us.

3. **"Where are we going to?"**

4. **"What is good and what is evil?"**

5. **"How should we act?"**

6. **"What is true and what is false?"**

While we are surrounded by a smorgasbord of WorldView “Options”, we are going to attempt to build a Biblical WorldView.

We will use a bit of different grid or chart, one that you can develop for yourself as you study God’s Word.

## **WorldView deals with Ten Disciplines (or Categories):**

**Theology**

**Philosophy**

**Ethics**

**Biology**

**Psychology**

**Sociology**

**Law**

**Politics**

**Economics**

**History**

Quickly throwing this grid onto **Genesis 1 – 11** ... here is what we come up with ...

**Theology**

- “God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

**Philosophy**

- “God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

**Ethics**

- “knowledge of good and evil” Genesis 2:9

**Biology**

- “after their kind” Genesis 1:21

**Psychology**

- “a living soul” Genesis 2:7

**Sociology**

- “be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth” Genesis 1:28

**Law**

- “I commanded you” Genesis 3:11

- “whoso sheddeth man’s blood” Genesis 9:6

**Politics**

- “whoso sheddeth man’s blood” Genesis 9:6

**Economics**

- “it shall be for food” Genesis 1:29

**History**

- “enmity between thee and the woman” Genesis 3:15

Not a one of the stated categories stands in isolation from any other. All are intertwined. It is impossible to separate them, except for discussion sake.

WorldView helps us sort through the thousands of choices we need to make through all our days.

Often disagreements between people are because of clashing WorldViews.

Consider one issue represented in the person of Henry Morgentaler ...

**Reports Dr. Henry Morgentaler May Get Order Of Canada Greeted By Applause And Anger**

Monday June 30, 2008  
CityNews.ca Staff

“Is it an honour or an outrage? That's the question being asked across the country after reports surfaced that Dr. Henry Morgentaler is being awarded the Order of Canada this week.

Morgentaler is the physician who championed a woman's right to have an abortion and performed them himself. The always controversial physician braved threats of violence, threats on his life and constant harassment both legal and verbal **for the cause he believed in.**

Some of those protests have died down over the past few years as Morgentaler's prominence sank into the background. But few can forget what happened a few short decades ago.

He's said to have performed hundreds of the procedures at his Toronto area clinics in the 1970s. He was repeatedly charged and even spent time in jail. His clinics were bombed by protestors. And he has been vilified by some religious groups, which equate abortion with murder.

But for better or for worse, he has **refused to surrender his principles.**”

... end of article ...

Morgentaler thinks he has done that which is right ... and many of us wonder how he can come to that kind of a conclusion.

He has done what he did because this is that in which he has “*believed in*”. He has acted on the basis of ... “**his principles**”.

His actions have been shaped by his WorldView, one with which most of us here would strongly oppose.

**Our WorldView affects everything in our lives for it is here that what we VALUE becomes evident.**

## **PRELIMINARY #5**

**Genesis takes on everyone with “just” one God.**

When the book of **Genesis** had first come off the press, there was no debate between Darwinian Evolution and the Biblical Creation Account.

The people who surrounded the Israelites were polytheists – they adjusted the lives to many differing gods.

That was the reality of living in Egypt.

But **Genesis** clarifies the religious scene for us when it tells us that ONE SPECIAL God alone was in charge of the entire universe.

What **Genesis** says happened in the beginning, did happen ... and it occurred not because of the gods, but ONE SPECIAL GOD.

**Genesis** stood out from the literature and religious texts of that day, just as it does today. Everybody else had a different line than **Genesis**.

**Genesis** was written to inform us that ONE GOD is responsible for all that we have today.

Now we are ready to once again come to God's opening lines.

With this rather extensive introduction, please return to **Genesis 1:1 – 2.**

**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**

**The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**

*Key Thought:*

**The God of the Bible alone is credited with the creation of our universe – and is the One to whom we must answer.**

We did not figure out what happened or how it happened through experimentation or thinking on our own.

**1. If God does not let us know what happened, we are rather clueless.**

No human being had their video recorder going

... when time ticked off its first seconds,

... when for the very first time you could point to an “object” or feel it with your hands ... and know that you had something concrete in your hands ... matter,

... when we could actually measure distance and know that there was something called “space”.

Explaining what happened at an event where no one is present ... is difficult.

While we were not present and do not know what went on, the God of the Bible was present and does know what went on.

At a later time He passed on to Moses, the human author of **Genesis**, what took place back “**in the beginning**”.

**The only information on the original creation story comes from a Divine Source.**

In matters where we do not know what happened, or what is going on, and the only explanation we have comes from God who let's us in on the facts ... that we call REVELATION.

**REVELATION:**

**God volunteers to communicate concealed details so that we might be informed.**

Christ-followers accept that God has spoken ... truthfully, accurately and personally. DIVINE REVELATION gives us information that God has decided to release. No one would ever figure it out on their own.

Whether we are going to accept that a God who is beyond us, has spoken to us ... and that He has the authority to tell us what to do ... is a choice that we face.

God has spoken.

He knows what He is talking about.

... and if we are going to figure anything out about ourselves, we are going to need to listen to Him.

God informs us that ...

## 2. Only God was present before the beginning

The answer to the question, “Where did God come from?” is unanswerable to us.

In philosophical language, God is called the “uncaused cause”.

God alone is eternal, having neither beginning nor end.

**Genesis** accepts that God is the bookends of time. He existed before the clock started to run, and will be quite healthy, spry and alive, suffering no ill effects of age when time runs out.

Hands down, God is the most important Being ... period.

This means that ... God is in charge, knows what He is doing, that we need to listen to Him ... and a long list of other realities that come very close to home.

It is this God who “**created the heavens and the earth**”.

## 3. God created everything that there is

God does what is unique only to Him ... He creates in the most creative way.

He produces that which is original, never before seen, unable to be reproduced by anyone else because no one possesses the intelligence or power to make it become a reality.

We are left without any comparisons, baffled because the work is beyond our figuring out.

Without any material on hand, nothing except Himself, **God makes something out of nothing** ... once again, something unique to God’s Creation Account.

The best that can be said is, “That’s just God!”

**... creation was neither “out of God” nor “out of matter” but “out of nothing.”**

... a simple analogy.

God is the great Sculptor. He decides to create a “studio” in which He will do His work.

The design He uses is such that wherever we look at His “studio” it displays His touch, His flavor, His character, His flair.

His “studio” is no one room little shack.

It is so big, contains so many square feet, that we find it unmeasurable.

What we are unable to measure or count , God keeps track of with perfect accuracy.

He just made it exist ... effortlessly, no sweat, just by speaking words.

Then as if God were taking a break to just imagine just how He would begin to furnish His “studio”, we read the next lines.

## Genesis 1:2

**The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**

Things were dark and rather shapeless.

God's creation was **EMPTY AND FORMLESS**.

It was not a mess, a shambles, a mistake that now needed to be reworked again, corrected and cleaned up. Nothing had been wrecked.

It was all good ... it just had not been organized and structured.

It was the "bare bones". The "studio" was unfurnished, like four bare walls.

"**Darkness, without form and void**" explain three conditions which God's work will address for six days.

The next words may come as a bit of a surprise.

**... the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**

We do not have "just" God, but are told a bit more about God.

The word can be translated here "Spirit of God" means either WIND, BREATH or SPIRIT.

Our translators have come to the conclusion that the best translation is SPIRIT OF GOD for good reason.

WIND does not "hover".

Further, we see the Spirit of God acting like this later on in Scripture.

Into this cold, lifeless, uninviting "studio" the Spirit of God is agitating in joyful anticipation because the plans that have been concocted are going to result in one spectacular universe.

The Spirit is filled with ideas and anticipation, like an interior decorator, with what can be done to make this "studio" the happening place.

The Spirit of God sees the possibilities and appears to be waiting for just the right moment to get started on the remainder of this tremendous project.

That's who the Spirit of God is – He sees what we do not see.

But more importantly, He also does what we cannot do.

He waits for the right moment to break out the divine surprises, surprises that were stored in the heart of the all powerful God.

This is still part of the Spirit of God's work today.

**... in conclusion ...**

Let us now make an attempt to do what we said we were going to do at the start this morning ...

If an ATHEIST were writing the opening lines of their Bible it would read ...

***“In the beginning the universe always existed. There never was a God and there is no God today ...***

If a NEW AGE person were writing the opening lines of their Bible it would read ...

***“In the beginning God was in everything and everything was God ...”***

If a CHRIST-FOLLOWER were writing the opening lines of the Bible it would read ...

***“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”***

Here is why ...

All are people of “faith”.

Some have a “good faith”, others a “bad faith”. Each view has religious overtones and serious life implications.

**The Christ-follower makes his “leap of faith” on the basis of God’s divine revelation.**

**The atheist (who is often an evolutionist) makes his “leap of faith” on absence of the original data.**

**The New Ager makes their “leap of faith” on the basis of their own consciousness and experiences.**

When we translate this into our WorldView grid this is what we come up with.

We start to fill in the blanks ... so that we might begin to think through “life” with clarity.

**WorldViews**

<b><u>Secular Humanism</u></b>	<b><u>Cosmic Humanism</u></b>	<b><u>Biblical Christianity</u></b>
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Let us define SECULAR HUMANISM and COSMIC HUMANISM through these charts ... so that we might know from where people are coming and why they say the things they do ... things at which we may shake our heads.

**Theology:**

<b>Atheist</b> (No God)	<b>Pantheism</b> (Everything is God)	<b>Theist</b> (God is His Own Being)
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**Secular Humanism: Atheist**

Excerpts from HUMANIST MANIFESTO 1 and 2

“Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created ... we begin with humans not God ... we can discover no

divine purpose or providence for the human species ... no deity will save us; we must save ourselves.”

The Secular Humanist refuses to even entertain the idea of a supernatural God.

He blocks his thinking from even going into that territory.

He trusts in science and his own experience to guide him into truth.

### Cosmic Humanist: Pantheism

We might be more familiar with the name – New Age.

Ruth Montgomery:

“We are as much God as God is a part of us ... each of us is God ... together we are God ... this all-for-one-and-one-for-all ... makes us the whole of God.”

Shirley MacLaine recommends that every person should begin each day by affirming his or her own godhood.

“You can use *I am God* or *I am that I am* as Christ often did, or you can extend the affirmation to fit your own needs.”

The New Ager trusts their own experience to guide them into “truth”.

### Biblical Christianity: Theist

A person following Biblical Christianity upon reading the opening words of the Bible sees God alive and well, involved and working in the universe at all levels.

The Christian trusts in God’s Word to find truth.

When we come to the word PHILOSOPHY, we may tend to turn up our noses. But stick with us for the next little while and get the bigger picture.

PHILOSOPHY looking at matters rationally and with reason. It is a structured method used to find that which is real. It develops the “borders” within which we will allow our thoughts to simmer.

### Philosophy:

<b>Natural Things Only</b>	<b>Focuses on Spiritual Nature Of Natural Things</b>	<b>Supernatural</b>
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### Secular Humanism: Natural Things Only

Whatever exists can be explained by natural causes ... by reason, science and democracy.

Robert Ingersoll:

“Nature ... cannot create but she eternally transforms. There was no beginning and there can be no end.”

### Cosmic Humanism: Spiritual Nature of Natural Things

The spiritual dimension of everything is the ultimate reality.

The truth is a feeling, and experience that allows us to tap into the great God-force within us.

Only one substance really exists: spiritual stuff. Matter is only a manifestation of the spirit.

We try to get in touch with the godhood of everything in us and around us, which brings about unity.

### Biblical Christianity:

While Christians put some faith in science, history and personal experience, they know that each of these are not fool-proof sources of truth.

Therefore the Christian believes that BIBLICAL REVELATION is trustworthy and true because of the character of God.

This does not mean that Christians bury their brains. They use their brains, but realize that their brain is not the ultimate discerner of truth.

The remaining categories will get filled in as we go further into God's Word.

**Ethics**

**Biology**

**Psychology**

**Sociology**

**Law**

**Politics**

**Economics**

**History**

The God of Genesis clashes with much of what we see around us.

There is much more to life than that which we see.

The answer is not within us for we are not gods and goddesses.

**The God of the Bible goes beyond all of our limitations and expectations.**

He is about to speak, He works, He creates, He is unlimited.

**This God is the one who none of us could ever dream up.**

**He is so different.**

... and that is why He has decided to speak to us and let us know through DIVINE REVELATION what we would never come up with on our own.

This is **the God that Genesis invites us to listen to and to give ourselves into His hands.**

He has plans for us.

This is the God of creation.