

CHAPTER TWO

1 IN THE BEGINNING

2 A PERSON

3 ANGELS AND STARS

1 IN THE BEGINNING

As Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, he must have felt like he was back in school again. Certainly he received an education in the process. The Israelites of that day knew very little about their God; so much of what they learned was new.

FOUR WORDS

The first book was called *Genesis*, which means *beginnings*. Genesis opens with four very profound words.

In the beginning God...

Genesis 1:1 NASB

The Bible does not begin with arguments for the existence of *YAHWEH*—the *LORD* is just there. He has always existed!

This would have been astonishing news to both Egyptian and Israelite. Even *Ra* had a beginning—the ancients said *Ra* created himself!¹ But *YAHWEH* was saying that he had been there all along. He had always existed, before plants, animals, people—before the earth and the universe. Moses wrote,

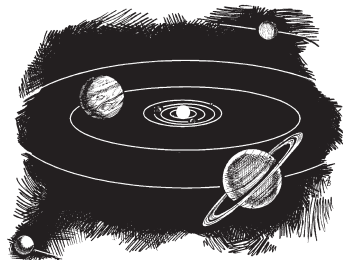
...from everlasting [past] to everlasting [future] You are God.

Psalms 90:2 NASB

The gods of the ancient Egyptians were born and grew old with time, but the Bible said the *LORD* had not only existed from eternity past, but he would live forever.

Since our bodies are finite—living on earth for only a short time—the concept of an eternal God is difficult for us to grasp. But there are illustrations to help our comprehension. For example, we can compare eternity with the cosmos.

Most of us can fathom our solar system—the sun surrounded by orbiting planets. We know it is vast, but space probes have made even the farthest distances seem reachable.



But go a step further and begin to measure the universe. If we were to climb into a spaceship and travel at the speed of light, we would circle the earth seven times in one second! Heading out into space at the same speed, we would pass the moon in two seconds, Mars in four minutes, and Pluto in five hours. From there you are off into our galaxy, the Milky Way.

At the speed of light
you circle the
earth seven
times in one
second ...



... pass the
Moon in two
seconds ...

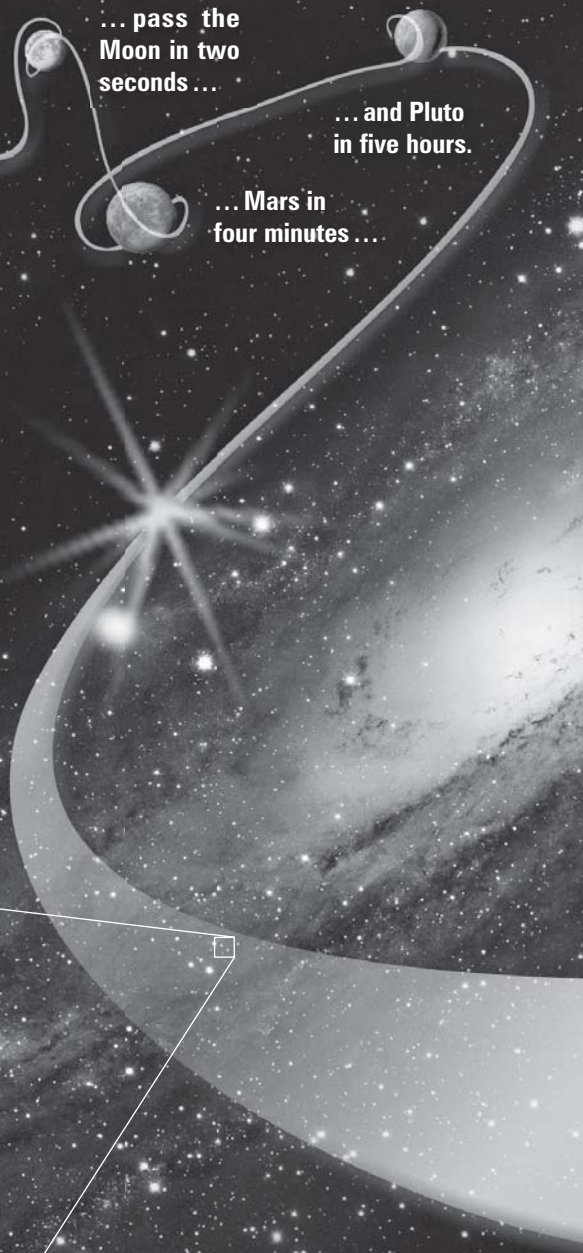


... and Pluto
in five hours.

... Mars in
four minutes ...

There are 60 seconds in a minute. If you travel at the speed of light you will go 300,000 kilometres or 186,000 miles in just one second. Think how far you would go in a minute, in one hour, in a day, or in a year! At the speed of light, it would take 4.3 years to reach the closest star, which means each second of those years you travel 186,000 miles or 300,000 kilometres—a total distance equivalent to 25,284,000,000,000 miles or 40,682,300,000,000 kilometres!

Our star, the sun, is near the edge of the Milky Way Galaxy. Our entire Solar System with its orbiting planets could fit in this box.



The Milky Way Galaxy

The band of stars you see in the night sky is part of a gigantic family of stars called the Milky Way Galaxy. Travelling at the speed of light, it would take 100,000 years to cross it from one side to the other. There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the Universe, many comprising billions of stars. Galaxies come in clusters and super-clusters. There are about twenty galaxies in our cluster, and thousands of galaxies in our super-cluster.

Want a star named after you?³

Based on the present population of the earth, you could have 16 *galaxies* named after you. That means *billions* of stars could carry your name!

At the speed of light, you will reach the next closest galaxy in 2,000,000 years ...



At this point you have only begun to travel the Universe.



... and the next closest cluster of galaxies in 20,000,000 years.

Yes, the thought of eternity is difficult to grasp, but so is the vastness of our universe. Both are mind-boggling, yet both are real. And when it comes to the eternality of the *LORD* God, the Bible speaks emphatically on this point. It says he is eternal, and his *forever existence* is such an inherent part of his nature that it is used as one of his names.

...the name of the *LORD*, the everlasting God... *Genesis 21:33 KJV*

2 A PERSON

One time I was discussing the Bible with a young couple when suddenly the husband stopped me and with a puzzled voice said, “The way you talk about God is as if he were a person.”

I said, “Yes, that is correct.” I then asked him what he was thinking.

“Well,” he said, “I’ve never thought of God that way before. I guess I always thought he was some sort of... some sort of force.”

I assured him that the Scripture defines the *LORD YAHWEH* as a living being—with character and personality—not as some sort of universal force or divine mind.

ONE YAHWEH, MANY NAMES

One of the ways the Bible reveals to us the *personality of God* is through his names. Though it is appropriate to say that God has only one *personal name*, he has other names that function as titles, all declaring something about his character. For example, *YAHWEH* is often called the *Most High*.

That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD [YAHWEH], are the Most High over all the earth. Psalm 83:18 NASB

The name *Most High* emphasizes the *LORD*’s role as a sovereign ruler. Just as ancient empires had absolute leaders or sovereigns who reigned over their domains, so *YAHWEH* is King of the universe.

We know that the ancient Egyptians believed that *Ra* was the chief god, and that all the other gods and goddesses were created by him. *But was the LORD YAHWEH the chief God in a family of gods? Did he have other gods and goddesses under him? Was the name YAHWEH just another name for the god Ra?*

First of all, it is very important to understand that *YAHWEH* is *not* another name for *Ra* or for that matter, any other god. Secondly, the Scripture speaks of many gods and goddesses, but they are *not*

part of a family of gods with the *LORD* at the top. As we progress in the story, we will see where the other gods fit in the puzzle, but for now, all we need to know is that ...

... the LORD ... is the living God and the everlasting King.

Jeremiah 10:10 NASB

The idea of *LORD YAHWEH* being king may conjure up an image of an old man seated on a gold throne floating somewhere in the stratosphere. Though the Bible nowhere illustrates the *LORD* as an old man, it does refer to his throne—not set in a cloud, but rather situated in a perfect place called *Heaven*.

The LORD is on his heavenly throne.

Psalms 11:4 NIV

The Bible tells us that the *LORD* rules from Heaven. We don't know much about this place, but the little we do know is wonderful. We will discuss Heaven in greater detail later on.

A SPIRIT

In the Bible the *LORD* is referred to using the male gender, as in *he* and *him*. This does not mean he has sexual characteristics as do humans. *YAHWEH* is not like *Ra* or any of the other Egyptian deities—he has no wives or children. The Bible tells us that,

God is spirit ...

John 4:24 NASB

The ancients often illustrated their deities as part animal, part human. No such depiction was ever attempted of *YAHWEH*, since being a spirit he cannot be seen—he doesn't have a body of flesh.

Think of a funeral of a friend who has died. If the casket was open, you may have seen the body, but where was your friend? He was gone; your friend's spirit was no longer present. When we look at someone, we only see their house, the human body; we don't actually see the real person, the spirit. In the same way, *YAHWEH* cannot be seen because he is a spirit, but he still has all the attributes of a person—having character and personality.

SUMMARY

We have barely commenced our study, but already we have learned quite a bit about the *LORD YAHWEH*.

He is an eternal being—not an impersonal force.

He is a spirit—without physical body or bodily functions.

He is the *Most High*, the Sovereign Ruler of all.

And that's the way it was—*In the beginning ...*

3 ANGELS AND STARS

We now read another word which follows the first four words that Moses wrote.

*In the beginning God **created**...*

Genesis 1:1 NASB

The *LORD*'s first creative act is scattered across the pages of Scripture. You can pull together enough information to answer simple questions, but that is where it stops. The Bible was not written to satisfy man's endless curiosity. It gives basic information on some events, but when it comes to further details, the pages fall silent. This is precisely the case with the subject of spirit beings.

NAMES

The Bible calls spirits by many different names. We often call them *angels*, but the Scripture uses many terms to define them: *cherubim*, *seraphim*, *angels*, *archangels*, *morning stars*—the list goes on. Collectively they are referred to as *multitudes*, *hosts*, or *stars*.* These spirits are not abstract impersonal forces as one might see in certain movies, but rather they are *persons* or *beings* capable of thought and feeling.

*Not to be confused with stars in the sky.

The host of heaven worships You [YAHWEH].

Nehemiah 9:6 NKJV

They may all have individual names but only a few are mentioned, such as *Gabriel* and *Michael*.

INVISIBLE, INNUMERABLE

As with the *LORD*, spirits are invisible, having no bodies of flesh and blood like you and me. Even though we can't see them, they must be everywhere. The idiom used to number just those surrounding God's throne communicates an unfathomable sum.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, ... and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.

Revelation 5:11 NKJV

Now this leads us to a question. *Since we saw that the LORD's throne is in Heaven, does this mean that Heaven is the angels' dwelling place?* Well, whether angels need a home or not is highly debatable, but taking the body of Scripture as a whole, it would seem that angels are based in Heaven yet can travel anywhere in the universe. The Bible is clear that angels—as spirits—do not live in temples, houses, rocks, trees, or rivers.

SERVANTS

At this point it would be reasonable to ask ourselves, “*Since the Bible speaks about many different gods, are angels gods or goddesses?*” The simple answer is, no, they are neither. Rather, they are spirit beings created to serve the *LORD YAHWEH* and do his pleasure. They are called *ministering spirits*.

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve . . . ?

Hebrews 1:14 NIV

The word *angel* is derived from a Greek term meaning *messenger* or *servant*. Because the *LORD* made them, they belonged to him and did whatever *YAHWEH* asked them to do.

CREATOR—OWNER

The concept of the *creator* also being the *owner* has lost its strength in our money-driven economy. I remember walking through a tribal village in Papua New Guinea. Every item I asked about—“*Whose paddle is this?*” “*Whose canoe is that?*”—elicited a response that designated an owner. When I inquired how they knew who the owner was, they looked at me in disbelief. Apparently I had asked a foolish question. To them it was obvious. “*The owner is the one who made it!*” The creator-owner connection was very strong.

Since the *LORD* created the angels it was not out of place for them to be considered his possessions. And since they belonged to him, they were to do his bidding—as his servants and messengers. This was not some ancient form of servitude. There are no parallels here to forced bondage. The angels could have had no better Creator-Owner.

EXTRAORDINARY INTELLECT AND POWER

To carry out his directives, the *LORD* created the angels with great intellect and power. They were created as perfect beings without any evil. But they weren’t robots either; they each had a will which gave them the ability to choose.⁴ This is significant.

The Scripture often speaks of the angels praising the *LORD* as they go about their work. The word *praise* means *to speak of the excellence of a person, to show admiration*.

Praise the Lord, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

Psalms 103:20-21 NLT

But praise is meaningless if not given freely. Let me illustrate using a different form of human expression—sympathy.

For a while I spent time in a country where it was common to have paid mourners. At a funeral there would be a separate group of people wailing and weeping intensely. It was heart-rending to watch, but they could shut it off instantly, especially if they decided they were not being paid enough. The sympathy they expressed looked real, but it was not genuine. It was empty of meaning.

If the angels had been programmed like robots to praise the *LORD*, it would have been as empty as the hired mourners; but since they were created with a free will, any expression of joy, love, or appreciation was genuine. In the Bible the praise of *YAHWEH* is often connected to the concept of *worship*.

You preserve them all, and the angels of heaven worship you.

Nehemiah 9:6 NLT

WORSHIP

The word *worship* has the idea of showing someone profound love and admiration because you consider that person *worthy* of esteem. It's a form of praise. In this case the angels worship God.

This is only fitting since the *LORD* is the Sovereign King and, as such, rightly deserves to be held in high esteem. By way of contrast, if I am boasting about a friend's deeds, someone else could call into question whether my friend deserves as much praise as I'm giving him. But the Bible says the *LORD* is truly worthy of honour, so the angels are quite right in directing their praise toward *YAHWEH*—to worship him and him alone.

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.

Revelation 4:11 NKJV

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT

It should be noted that angels share some similarities with man, though man is not nearly as powerful or intelligent. The Bible says that the *LORD YAHWEH* made man...

... a little lower than the angels...

Psalms 8:5 NKJV

Though similar, angels are distinct from man. They never die.⁵ They neither marry nor reproduce.⁶ Though normally unseen, on certain assignments they are visible. When they talk to man, the language they use is understandable to the hearer.

Because angels do at times mingle with and talk to people, the Bible states that there are occasions when these spirit beings have been confused with God or gods. But as we saw before, the *LORD YAHWEH* created them, and they are distinct from him. They are neither gods nor part of the *LORD* God. Just as a canoe paddle does not fit in the “maker” or “creator” category, angelic beings do not fit in the “God” category. They are distinctly different. One is the Creator; the other is the *created*.

Role	Category	Personal Name(s)
Creator	God	YAHWEH
created	spirit being (angel)	Gabriel, Michael

THE ANOINTED CHERUB

The most powerful, the most intelligent, and the most beautiful spirit ever created was a cherub. Some Bible editions directly translate his name into Latin as *Lucifer*, but the original Hebrew name means *shining one* or *star of the morning*.

O shining one, son of the dawn!

Isaiah 14:12 YLT

The *Shining One* was referred to as an *anointed cherub*. The meaning of the word *anointed* has its origins in the ancient rite of pouring oil on *someone* or *something* to set it apart for a special task. The act of anointing was considered sacred and not to be taken lightly.

“You were an anointed guardian cherub . . . You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created . . .”

Ezekiel 28:14-15 ESV

The *Shining One’s* job description kept him in the presence of the *LORD* at all times. We will learn more about this anointed cherub as the story progresses.

THE ANGELS WATCH

With the creation of the spirit beings, the *LORD’s* creative acts had begun. Now, as all the angelic host watched and rejoiced, the *Most High* embarked on his next great work—the creation of the entire universe.

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars [or spirit beings] sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Job 38:4-7 NLT