

CHAPTER TWO

1 IN THE BEGINNING GOD

2 ANGELS, HOSTS AND STARS

1 IN THE BEGINNING GOD...

The Bible starts with four very profound words:

In the beginning God...

Genesis 1:1 NASB

There are no opening arguments for the existence of God—it is assumed he exists. God is just *there*.

ETERNAL

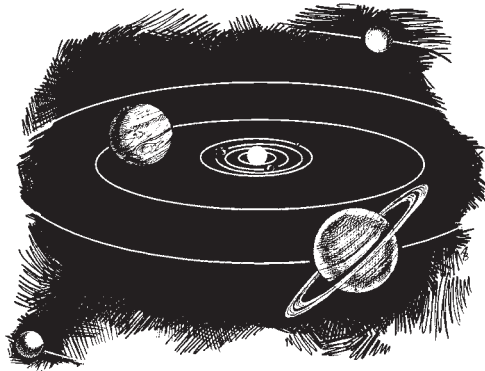
God has been *there* all along. God existed before plants, animals and people, before the earth and the universe. He had no beginning and he will have no end. God has always been and will always be. The Bible says that God has existed from everlasting past to everlasting future. God is eternal.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth... from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Psalm 90:2 NIV

The concept of an eternal God is difficult for us to grasp. It's so troublesome to our intellect that often we file it in our cranium under the label *impossible*. 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's vast, but space probes have made 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!* How did you enjoy your tour? A little brisk, perhaps? Heading out into space at the same speed, we would pass the moon in two seconds, the planet 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 ...

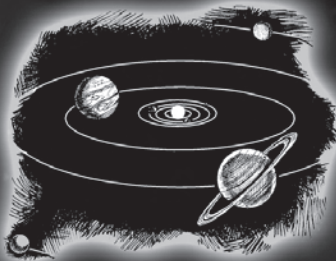


... Mars in four minutes ...

... and Pluto in five hours.

At the speed of light, you will reach the closest star in 4.3 years, which means each second of those years you travel 186,000 miles or 300,000 kilometers—a total distance equivalent to 25,284,000,000,000 miles or 40,682,300,000,000 kilometers.

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.



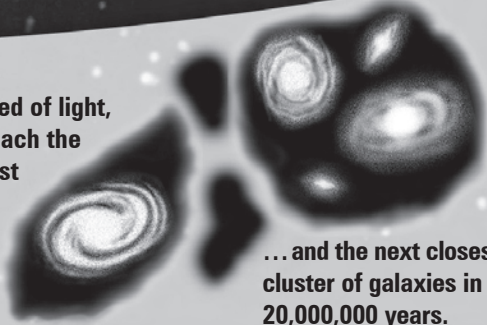
The Milky Way Galaxy¹

The band of stars you see in the night sky is part of a gigantic family of stars called the Milky Way Galaxy. Traveling 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?²

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 ...



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

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

Yes, the thought of an eternal God is difficult to grasp, but so is the vastness of our universe. Both are mind-boggling, yet both are real. The Bible speaks emphatically on this point. God's eternal existence is such an inherent part of his nature that the Bible refers to it as his name ...

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

MANY NAMES

God has many names or titles, each declaring something about his character. We will look at three:

1) I AM

God said ... "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this ... 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14 ESV

The closest one can get to an explanation of this statement is this: *I AM the One who is* or *I AM the self-existent one*. God exists by his own power.

We need food, water, air, sleep, light—an endless supply of essential items to live—but not God. He requires nothing, nothing at all! He is the *self-existent one*, the *I AM*.

2) LORD

The title *I AM* is not commonly used in the Bible because its meaning is embedded in the word **LORD**.

No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. Jeremiah 10:6 NIV

The name **LORD** not only highlights God's eternal self-existent state, but also focuses our attention on his position—a position that is higher than all others. He is **LORD** of lords.

3) THE MOST HIGH

This name ties in with the name **LORD** by emphasizing God's role as a sovereign ruler.

Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth. Psalms 83:18 NIV

Just as ancient empires had absolute leaders or sovereigns who reigned over their domains, so God is King of the universe, the God Most High.

Even the word *God* itself emphasizes his position as supreme ruler. The word *God* means *strong one, mighty leader, supreme Deity*.

The idea of God as king may conjure up an image of an old man seated on a gold throne floating somewhere in the stratosphere. The Scripture nowhere illustrates God as an old man, but it does refer to God's throne—not ensconced in a cloud—but rather in a *holy temple* situated in Heaven.

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.

Psalm 11:4 NIV

God rules from Heaven. We don't know much about this place called *Heaven*, but the little we do know is incredible. We will discuss this in greater detail later on, but for now it is enough to know that God is the supreme Ruler.

ONLY ONE GOD

The term *The Most High* speaks of God's unique place in the universe. There is no one else like him. He stands alone, the sovereign LORD of all.

I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God.

Isaiah 45:5 NASB

Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.

Isaiah 43:10 NASB

There is no hierarchy of gods, with one big God ruling the roost as it were. No other gods exist *out there*, whether self-existent or created.

This is what the Lord says... "I am the First and the Last; there is no other God."

Isaiah 44:6 NLT

The Bible is emphatic—there is only one God.

A SPIRIT

Before we leave this subject, we need to understand one last thing. The Bible tells us that God is invisible because he is a spirit.

God is spirit...

John 4:24 NASB

You can't see a spirit because it doesn't have flesh and bones like we do. But just because you cannot see somebody doesn't make that person any less real.

Think of a funeral of a friend who has died. If the casket was open, you may have looked at the body. The body was there, 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.

We will see that the Bible indicates in many different ways that man's spirit starts at a point in time and then lives on forever. But God is different; he never had a beginning and he will never end. He is the only eternal spirit, living from everlasting past to everlasting future.

God:

He is a **spirit**

He is **eternal**.

He is the *I Am*—the self-existent one.

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

He is the **only God**.

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

2 ANGELS, HOSTS AND STARS

God's first creative act is scattered across the pages of the Bible. You can pull together enough information to answer rudimentary questions, but that is where it stops. The Bible is 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—some singular, some plural. We often call them angels, but the Bible 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.

The host of heaven worships You.

Nehemiah 9:6 NKJV

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

*Not to be confused with stars in the night sky. Context reveals which meaning is in question.

INVISIBLE, INNUMERABLE

As with God, 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 Bible indicates that there are ...

... thousands upon thousands of angels ... Hebrews 12:22 NIV

The idiom used to number just those surrounding God's throne communicates an unfathomable sum.

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne ...

Revelation 5:11 NIV

SERVANTS

The angelic beings were created to serve God and do his pleasure. They are called ministering spirits.

Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

Psalms 103:20–21 NIV

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

Hebrews 1:14 NIV

The word *angel* is derived from the Greek term, meaning *messenger* or *servant*. Because God created them, they belonged to him and were to do whatever God asked them to do.

CREATOR—OWNER

The concept of the creator also being the owner has lost its strength in our industrialized, 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. Upon inquiring how they knew who the owner was, they looked at me incredulously. *"Well, the owner is the one who made it!"* The creator-owner connection was very strong. When I questioned them if it would be all right for me to break a paddle, they were just as emphatic that it would not be a good idea—unless I wanted to have trouble with the creator-owner. Taking it a step further, I asked if it was acceptable for the owner to break it. They gave a tribal shrug and a nod: *"It's okay for the owner to break it—he made it."*

God created the angels and so 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, God created the angels with great intellect and power. Some of these angelic beings had more capability than others. The angels 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.³

SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT

Angels share some similarities with man, though man is not nearly as powerful or intelligent. The Bible says that God made man...

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

Psalm 8:5 NKJV

Though similar, angels are distinct from man. They never die.⁴ They neither marry nor reproduce.⁵ Though normally unseen, on certain assignments they make themselves visible. When they talk to man, the language they use is understandable to the hearer.

THE ANOINTED CHERUB

The most powerful, the most intelligent and the most beautiful spirit ever created was a cherub. His name is translated as *Lucifer*,⁶ which means *shining one* or *morning star*.

... O Lucifer, son of the morning!

Isaiah 14:12 NKJV

Lucifer 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 to God for a special task. This act was considered sacred and not to be taken lightly.

You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created...

Ezekiel 28:14–15 NIV

It seems that Lucifer's job kept him in the presence of God at all times. Perhaps he somehow represented the rest of the angels and led them in worship and praise of their Creator-Owner. We will learn more about this anointed cherub later.

WORSHIP

The word *worship* comes from an old English word meaning *to declare a person's worth*. The Bible says that all the angels worshiped God.

You impart life to them all, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

Nehemiah 9:6 NET

That is only fitting since God is the Sovereign King and, as such, rightly deserves to have his worth declared. 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. But the Bible says God is worthy of all praise.

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!"

Revelation 4:11 NET

For you are great and do amazing things. You alone are God.

Psalms 86:10 NET

ALL THE ANGELS WATCH CREATION

God's creative act had begun. Now, as all the angelic host watched and rejoiced, God embarked on his next great work of art.

His canvas: the universe

His subject: the whole earth.

"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