

TUTORIAL

1.9

God created angels, the heavens and the earth

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Genesis 1:1-2, Job 38.**

Last Time

Before launching into the flow of the narrative, we reminded ourselves who our Storyteller is. He is Eternal, experiencing past, present and future. No limits in time and space. Not dependent, the great Reality. He owns everything, He's over everything. He writes the Story as well as telling it.

The spirit beings that existed before the universe

Before starting into the narrative, we'll remind ourselves about who, apart from God, was there. God had brought into existence an enormous number of beings. The Biblical narrative doesn't focus on these beings that predate our world, but we get glimpses and clues which we can piece together into a composite picture. We'll do that briefly now, because they play an immediate role in the narrative itself. And they play a role today – any time someone is hearing God's Story.

They are “spirits” as a collective term – again, all we have for referring to *personal beings that are not limited to our physical world, to bodies*. The Narrative often refers to them, or to some of them, as “angels”. It's always worth stopping and thinking about words, terms we use and the ideas, assumptions that cluster around them. Think about terms, words, “spirits” and “angels” and the images, concepts that have been attached to those by popular culture. Try to identify and put aside those assumptions so that the Biblical narrative itself shapes your understanding of the role of these beings.

A few things we *do* know about them from the Bible:

As we've said, they predate the world, the physical universe we live in - we're told the angels were witnesses to its creation.

We know that there are lots of them, perhaps millions.

They don't have bodies like ours, but at least some have the ability to appear in our physical, material dimension.

Because they were created, like us, they're dependent, contingent...not eternal.

Of course, because it was God creating them, they were all originally perfect. They have personality - not robotic or controlled.

We'll see this emerge from the Narrative. To personal beings He creates, He gives real freedom to choose whether they'll listen to Him as God or go their own way.

And he gave them varying capabilities to fit the roles He had for them. A whole range of power, and knowledge and capacity to rule. How, or exactly what, is not entirely clear to us, but some at least have what's called "dominion", influence, some level of control.

The greatest among these servant angel beings was called Lucifer. Also created perfect and given incredible abilities to lead in their responsibilities. These beings, multitudes of them, were there at *the beginning*.

The Story begins

...with a straightforward statement that when it all started, was when God created "the heavens and the earth". Not "once upon a time", but "in the beginning", or, "To get things started". Of course there is eternity as a backdrop, if you like, but really the Story which God wants to tell us – which we can relate to, His interaction with us – begins then. We're all only too aware of the starting points of stories, as told by others...for our society, that is primarily "Science". We need to note that that story along with its starting points, is the product of predetermined stances – a materialistic, closed system. The trajectories of their assumptions, a kind of faith, logically points to that starting point – big bangs ("short-hand" for saying "A beginning without a personal God").

God's Story, the only one qualified to tell the Story, begins with Him creating when there was nothing physical, material, in existence. A very difficult concept for us from inside that physical, material world to grapple with. But that's what this Story is – God acting in a "God way", from outside the bounds of what is, otherwise, possible. Remember, it's His Story. His reality.

So He made stuff where nothing existed. That's part of being God. Being able to do that. Unique, of course, to Him. Not even angels with all their "spirit-world" understanding and abilities can do that. Job 38 describes this creation, and says the angels actually shouted for joy as they observed Him doing it.

What does it take to create?

It's beyond our human language's capacity – which reflects our minds' inability to begin to understand – what power and knowledge, this represents. To bring

something into being where nothing existed. It involves knowing what *stuff* is, an exhaustive understanding of energy and light, motion, matter. If we could bring all together for one instance, all the information contained in all the websites and servers, all the power in all the nuclear reactors, the electrical grids, the ships it wouldn't be a blip on the radar of his knowledge and power. It wouldn't bring something out of nothing. It's His Story.

Things weren't yet put in order

God telling the story (Gen 1:2) describes the earth as created – the raw substance was there – but without order. Swirling chaos, dark, empty and lifeless. Water covering the planet. Uninhabitable. Not yet a fit place for anything or anyone. But His Spirit there, ready to do what God - the Three in One God - had planned *from before the beginning*. God knew where He would take this. Where His Story would go next.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. How does the idea of there being spirits and a spiritual world fit into your view of things and your daily experience of life?
2. What is your view of creation and the whole issue of whether the Genesis account is literal or not?
3. Were you taught science and other subjects in school/university from an evolutionist, old-earth perspective?
4. Do you feel there is any tension between the fact that God is all-powerful and the pain and suffering we see in the world?



ACTIVITIES

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1. Ask someone you know who is a Christian, and also someone who isn't, these questions and record their answers (try to keep it well under a page of notes):
 - What do you think of when you hear the terms (a) "spirit" (b) "spiritual"?
 - Do you believe in angels? If so, do they have bodies?
 - Do you think the spirits of the dead can influence this world?
 - What are your ideas about spirits and angels based on?