

Setting the Stage

1

Genesis

Chapter 1

Where does understanding begin?

First, God already was. And existence of everything else was from Him. And our world, our reality, was not at first a place that we could recognize, nor was anything in it that would make sense to us. But the eternal Spirit was there, overseeing all the elements He had created.

The first two sentences He gave us tell us that much.

God was going to begin something with that formless, silent stuff. He was going to give shape to a place, and He was going to give movement to the lifeless. We get our first orientation from our surroundings, and from the experience of the past and anticipation of the future. We live within place and time.

God did not make us adrift in a random multiverse. He brought us into a meaningful universe He had already designed for our habitation. He filled silence with His own meaning--not a meaning that changed from what was thought before, but the original meaning from which all meaning is birthed. He did not create something pointless. Everything would be relational, because everything would begin with communication.

He would create everything by speaking.

Ideas do not exist independent from the one who thinks them. Communication involves relationship, and relationship involves speaking with breath which the Creator is purposefully providing.

Sometimes the most essential truths get lost in translation. "Let there be light" is an awkward translation for a life-giving address. Light as we know it was never merely allowed to be. It did not pre-exist, straining against some barrier until a random deity decided to release it. He did not let it be; He spoke it, and He spoke to it.

"Light, be," said the eternal Mind who thought it. By speaking to it, He began its existence. It is, quite literally, because He says it is. It is, from its beginning, related to Him. We are because He speaks to us. His words to us create us.

"Be, light. Be, day and night, measurable time. That's good.

"Be, water and sky, habitable place. That's good.

"Be, land and sea, plants and seed and trees and fruit,
an on-going process of spreading life, thriving from water and sky. That's good.

"Be, sun, moon and stars, markers of time and place so we can see design

in the progression of seasons, the multiplication cycle of seed and growth and fruit and seed again. That's good.

"Be, fish and birds, living within this ecosystem, sharing in this life-giving process, multiplying, filling the world. That's good.

"Be, herds and swarms and beasts. That's good.

"We'll make men and women in our image to reign over the fish, the birds, the herds, the land, the wildlife."

Male and female do not appear accidentally in a chaos of meaningless matter. We are conceived to thrive in a relationship with the First Speaker, within a coherent habitation, to marvel in it, to recognize the design in it, to share the significance of caring for it.

We do not exist by some chaotic blunder. We are personally meant. We are Word-spoken. The whole universe is voiced into existence by the eternal Meaning. We exist relationally, in response to the eternal Speaker. The World depends on an idea before it is given shape and set in motion. It begins as meaning because it is spoken by someone.

To men and women God said, "Prosper. Multiply. Spread around the world. Manage it. Be responsible for the time and place I give you." And it was very good.

He is. He speaks. He speaks what is very good. He speaks life into existence.

From the first, there has been God, who speaks, who relates, who gives meaning and relevance to everything. There is no existence apart from the eternal Spirit who speaks, always, to those who exist because He is speaking to them.

From the first, God was making Himself known. That is how His story to us begins.

* * *