

The History Of The Universe

Introduction. No matter what the song claims, it's not a small world after all. This bumpy spheroid we call earth has a circumference that spans almost 25,000 miles at the equator. That gives us roughly 200,000,000 square miles of surface area, with approximately 57,500,000 of that being land. And what does that tell us? It tells us God wanted a big canvas.

On these rocky shores and towering mountains, God had a saga planned. An epic He'd plotted before the first raindrop rolled off a leaf, before the first comet streaked through the solar system, before light itself broke into the darkness.

God is writing history on this whirling blue planet. And He placed this unique globe in an absolutely huge universe, which is the stage you'd expect for a God-sized plan. I'd tell you how big our universe is, but we really can't be sure. The best estimate we have for what we can see of the universe is roughly 92 billion light-years from one end to the other. And the part we can't see could be many, many times bigger than that. In other words, so big our brains get tangled even trying to comprehend it.

But having such a colossal universe as the setting for such an impressive planet on which such a big narrative plays out doesn't mean explaining that history — and future — has to be a big, complicated task. In fact, you can get the core facts in seven short, easy-to-remember Bible verses. If you take hold of these seven verses, you can sum up the the past, present, and future in a simple way that's easy to explain.

I. Genesis 1:1

- A. We could do a detailed study of the Hebrew here and unfold this passage with all its linguistic nuances. But that's not really necessary. The message is clear: God directly and personally created the universe from nothing.
- B. That may seem simple, but it's not. When you start with the idea that a holy, righteous, perfect, powerful God created the universe, you start laying the groundwork for some big scriptural concepts: 1) We are here because He made us; 2) He's in charge of everything, including us; and, 3) He determines right and wrong in the universe He made and rules over.
- C. It also means God interacts with His creation — and has from the very beginning. He's not a distant, uncaring Creator; He's the only true God, and He's willing to get His hands dirty by taking part in His creation (literally — Jesus washed His disciples' feet, John 13:4-5). He has a perfect plan, and He's all-powerful enough to make it happen.
- D. That furthermore tells us we can trust the eyewitness book He gave us. An always-there, all-powerful Creator can easily tell us exactly what He wanted us to know — and He did.
- E. The Genesis 1 account lays out an incredible picture of how God made the world in a single week. Just look at all those ordinal numbers (first, second, third ...). This isn't an artistic, wishy-washy story of billions of years wrapped up in flowery, metaphorical language. This is the vivid portrayal of an eyewitness.

- F. God doesn't need long periods of time or primordial goo to get His act together. He's quite capable of making a fully functioning universe in six 24-hour days and resting on the seventh. And He tells us that's exactly what He did.

II. Genesis 2:17

- A. So, God created the universe and the first man and woman and declared the status of this great garden "very good" (Genesis 1:31). What does that mean? That there was no suffering, no death, no destruction, and no backbreaking labor. God doesn't use "very good" lightly. He meant it.
- B. But then we come to the as-yet-unnamed Adam and Eve. They enjoyed close access to their Creator, apparently including regular conversations with Him. Even those face-to-face meetings with God couldn't keep them from breaking the one rule He had given them.
- C. When Adam disobeyed, God cursed the creation as punishment (Genesis 3:16-19). Everything broke under the weight of that curse. Heart disease, cancer, and respiratory illness wormed its way in, and death — that great enemy — set up shop in our now-crumbling universe.
- D. It's the most foundational answer to the question everyone asks: "Why God? Why did this happen?" Because we're sinful humans, but that's not the end of God's plan, as we'll see.
- E. The curse in response to Adam's disobedience gave rise to every bad action and occurrence in our world — from salmonella poisoning to tsunamis. God intended a world without death, but that depended on our obedience.

III. Genesis 7:23

- A. After Adam disobeyed, the world got really bad. God had to do something about people's sin. He can't just leave sin unpunished because that would go against who He is. He's loving and also the judge of sin. Those aren't opposites.
- B. So, our Creator sent a global Flood to destroy every human and every air-breathing animal that lived on land. Every one except those onboard the ark. The Bible calls Noah a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). The massive construction project of the ark would be a pretty graphic warning.
- C. The account of the Flood explains several facts about our world.
 - 1. The action of the water and sediment during the Flood laid down many of the fossils and rock layers beneath our feet.
 - 2. All the animals in our world today descended from the animal kinds that boarded the ark. For that matter, all people descended from Noah's three sons and three daughters-in-law.
 - 3. The Flood couldn't have been local because God promised never to cause an event like that again (Genesis 9:11) — not to mention that the waters covered all the mountains (Genesis 7:19).
 - 4. The Flood shows God does, and will, punish sin (2 Peter 2:9).

IV. Genesis 11:9

- A. We're still in the bad news section of the history of the universe. After the Flood, God commanded people to multiply and spread out to fill the newly reshaped

earth (during the Flood, the continents separated, the mountains rose, and the valleys opened).

- B. But these rebels didn't listen. They defied the Creator of everything — the One who'd just shown how powerful He is with a cataclysmic catastrophe that carved canyons and cut cliffs. Instead of spreading out, the Flood-surviving descendants stayed put and decided to build a monument to their mutiny that we call the Tower of Babel.
- C. But you can't stop God's plan. He commanded them to spread out, and that's what would happen. They chose to do it the hard way when He came down to confuse their language and disperse them.
- D. The division and dispersion at Babel gives us a clear framework for understanding why we have the various people groups of today (especially when you combine it with the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10, indicating that Japheth inhabited Europe, Ham inhabited Africa, and Shem inhabited Asia). Even though we have various levels of color in our skin and we speak different languages, we're all children of Adam and Eve through Noah (Acts 17:26).
- E. After Babel, the genetic variety of humanity was quite diverse. That's why we find Neanderthals, Homo erectus, and "Hobbits" plus many other distinct people groups in the fossil record all over Europe, Asia, Australia, the Americas, and Africa. These aren't evolutionary dead-ends; they're fully human — even if some lived in caves.

V. John 3:16

- A. No matter how crazy everything may have seemed (and still seems), God always had a plan. The Maker of nebulae and neutrons would fix this mess. God had given a taste of this plan way back in Genesis 3:15, and He whispered more and more of what would happen throughout the rest of the Old Testament.
- B. A future descendant of Adam would come to do battle with Satan and to bring sin and death to its knees. But those ancient prophecies didn't describe just an ordinary man; this would also be the divine, kingly Son (Psalm 2:1-9). This would be the Creator Himself becoming an actual human and coming to earth to set everything right.
- C. The Son of God — given the name Jesus — didn't launch a big invasion. He didn't make a grand entrance. He came to a tiny town with no political clout (Micah 5:2). And then He grew up in a small village called Nazareth.
- D. But what a life! Jesus did what Adam couldn't. He lived in complete obedience to His Heavenly Father and shared the message that God would one day destroy the curse. He even gave examples as He healed, fed huge crowds, and raised the dead (Acts 2:22-23). Jesus' obedience had a settled end of death that a prophet in Jerusalem had foretold many years before (Isaiah 52-53).
- E. Jesus came to share the gospel, to invade our sinful world, and bring light into darkness. That light is available to people who are willing to be called by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). This includes hearing (John 6:44-45), believing (Hebrews 11:6), repenting (Acts 17:30), confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and immersion in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

VI. 1 Corinthians 15:58

- A. For those who obey Christ's gospel, there is the command to abound in Christ's work (2 Corinthians 8:7; Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Peter 1:8).
- B. Jesus wanted people who would take up their cross and serve Him (Matthew 16:24-25; 25:34-40). This is a "pattern of good works" for which we are created (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:7).
- C. One of the greatest of all good works is taking the gospel to the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). Early Christians were dedicated to this task (Acts 8:4).
- D. All of this is part of being faithful, and Christ expects this to continue in us until we depart this life (Revelation 2:10).

VII. Revelation 21:4

- A. God's plan for this colossal, magnificent universe has a suitably colossal conclusion: Jesus, our Creator, will return to end the curse and rectify everything once and for all (1 Thessalonians 4:14-5:5). This present earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10), and He'll reign in a new heavens and a new earth, and those who trust and obey in His life, death, and resurrection will spend forever getting to be with Him. No death, no pain, no bad news anymore!
- B. Of all the events in God's unfolding plan, this is the only one that hasn't happened yet. But it is coming. Even though we can't know exactly when Jesus will return, we can be sure He will come. He'll keep this promise like He's kept all His others. And it'll be exactly when God plans it to be (Matthew 24:36).

Conclusion. The Bible gives us the perfect framework for understanding our world, but it doesn't contain every detail about its history and inner workings. You won't find black holes in Habakkuk or specifics about the Ice Age in Genesis.

However, the Bible contains key details that help us solve these mysteries. Furthermore, it provides a worldview by which all the issues can be properly determined. It may not agree with scientific discoveries bent on naturalistic explanations, but it does agree with God's holy, provable, and reliable scripture.

Use this opportunity today to be a part of God's plan — a plan from before the foundation of the earth which includes an invitation for your salvation (Ephesians 3:8-9; Revelation 22:17).

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