

Pleasant Springs Church

12-Week Study · A Quantum Case For God

WEEK 3 OF 12

The Big Bang and 'In the Beginning'

Lemaître, Hubble, expansion — and Genesis 1:1

THE BIG IDEA

For 2,200 years after Plato and Aristotle, the «steady-state» universe was scientific orthodoxy: the cosmos had always existed, fixed and eternal. Then in 1927 a Catholic priest named Georges Lemaître proposed that the universe was *expanding*, and therefore had a *beginning*. Edwin Hubble confirmed it by measuring redshift in 1929. The big bang was born. Two thousand years earlier, Genesis 1:1 had said the same thing in seven Hebrew words: **in the beginning, God created.**

Through the 1920s, every major cosmologist believed the universe had always existed in roughly its present form — eternal, static, unchanging. This was the philosophical inheritance of Plato and Aristotle, twenty-three centuries strong. To suggest otherwise was scientific blasphemy.

Then in 1927, a Belgian Catholic priest with a doctorate in physics, Monsignor Georges Lemaître, published a paper claiming the universe was actually *expanding*. If it was expanding now, he reasoned, it must have been smaller in the past. Run the film backward far enough and you arrive at a single point — what Lemaître called the *primeval atom* — from which everything came. The universe, he was saying, had a **beginning**.

Two years later in 1929, Edwin Hubble at Mount Wilson observatory measured the light from distant galaxies and found that almost every one of them was *redshifted* — their light stretched toward the red end of the spectrum, which means they were moving away from us. The further the galaxy, the faster it receded. The universe was, in fact, expanding. Lemaître was right.

The English physicist Fred Hoyle, who hated the theory, mocked it on a 1949 BBC broadcast as a «Big Bang idea.» The name stuck. What had been heretical in 1927 was mainstream by 1965 when the cosmic microwave background was discovered — the leftover radiation from the bang itself. The universe began. Genesis had said so for three thousand years.

SCRIPTURE

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Genesis 1:1 · In the Beginning, God Created

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

English Standard Version

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:1–3 · All Things Through Him

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

¹Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. ²οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. ³πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν.

English Standard Version

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Hebrews 11:3 · The Worlds Framed By the Word

Septuagint (LXX) / Greek New Testament

πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι Θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλέπομενον γεγονέναι.

English Standard Version

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

THE BIBLICAL CASE

‘In the Beginning’ — A Beginning Means a Beginner

Plato and Aristotle did not believe in a creator God. They did not need to — the universe, on their view, had always existed. A universe that has always existed needs no explanation. But a universe that *began* — that came into being at a finite moment in the past — demands an explanation. What caused it? On the philosophical principle that nothing comes from nothing, the answer must be something that did not itself begin. Something *eternal*. Lemaître’s discovery returned the cosmological argument to the front of the room.

The Hebrew “In the Beginning”

The first word of Genesis in Hebrew is *b’reshit*. The Septuagint translators rendered it *en archê* (Ἐν ἀρχῇ) — *in the beginning*, in a starting point. The same phrase opens John’s gospel a thousand years later.

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John writes *en archê ên ho Logos* — in the beginning was the Word — deliberately echoing Genesis 1:1. He wants the reader to make the connection: the One who began the universe is the same Word now incarnate in Christ.

Order of Creation — A Real Tension

Critics rightly point out that the Genesis order (heavens and earth, light, sky, dry land, plants, sun and moon, fish and birds, land animals, humans) does not match the scientific order (energy, the four forces, stars, galaxies, planets, primitive life, animals, humans). The two orders are not identical. Honest readers from Augustine onward have proposed several resolutions: the *day-age* view (each Genesis day is an epoch), the *framework* view (the six days are a literary structure of forming and filling, not a chronological log), and the *cosmic temple* view (Genesis 1 is the inauguration of the cosmos as God's temple). Week eleven will return to this carefully. For now: both books begin in the beginning, and the same God wrote them.

THE CONVERGENCE

Lemaître's discovery did not invent the doctrine of creation; it confirmed in physics what Genesis 1:1 had stated as scripture for three thousand years. The universe began. Whoever denies a beginning is now denying both the Bible *and* the cosmic microwave background.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why might it have been a Catholic priest, not an atheist physicist, who first proposed an expanding universe? What in his theological commitments may have made him more open to the data?
2. Genesis 1:1 says God created the heavens and the earth. The Big Bang says everything came from a singularity. Are these the same claim, complementary claims, or competing claims?
3. What do you make of John 1:1 deliberately echoing Genesis 1:1?
4. Hebrews 11:3 says «what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.» How does this match what physics now says about the singularity?
5. If you have wrestled with the apparent disagreement between the six days of Genesis and the 13.8-billion-year timeline, where are you in the wrestling now? (Week 11 will return to this directly.)

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CLOSING PRAYER

*God of the beginning, before the beginning you were. You spoke and the singularity unfolded. You spoke and time itself began ticking. We thank you for the Belgian priest who trusted the data, for the astronomer at Mount Wilson who measured the light, for every scientist who has helped confirm what your first verse already said. Make us your kind of beginners — humble, expectant, ready to be surprised by the largeness of what you have done. Through Jesus Christ, the Word who was in the beginning. **Amen.***

*Week 3 of 12 — A Quantum Case For God, a Pleasant Springs Church discipleship series. The complete 12-week study, and every other lesson, is at **ps-church.com/discipleship/quantum-case-for-god***