

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## *Lesson 2 (cont'd)*

### Genesis: Creation and Evolution

Last class, we started this lesson by observing the importance of integrating science and faith. As Christians, we need not run from science and common sense to some refuge we call belief. Rather, we can confidently explore not only the book of God's words (Scripture), but also the wonders of the natural world as the book of God's works, trusting that God is responsible for both and neither should shut out the other.

As Old Testament Professor Peter Enns (Westminster Seminary 1994-2008) has noted,

God honors our honest questions. He is not surprised by them, nor is he ashamed to be our God when we pose them. He is our God, not because of the questions we ask (or refrain from asking), but because he has united us to the risen Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This week, we continue by focusing on Genesis 1 and 2 considering different ways we might understand what is written. Our focus first considers some of the noteworthy features of the Genesis account. Then, we will consider several approaches to understanding these passages. After this section of our lesson, we will look at various scientific theories of origins noting how they integrate with views of Scripture. Finally, we will return to the Genesis text to understand the lessons presented in line with an integrated view of faith and science.

### AUGUSTINE'S WARNINGS

Augustine (354-430) wrote a number of books on Genesis. He wrote two early books setting out the allegorical meaning, "not venturing to expound the deep mysteries of nature in the literal sense."<sup>2</sup> Later, he decided to write on the literal interpretation, but he stopped before finishing because, "I collapsed under the weight of a burden I could not bear."<sup>3</sup> Time would allow Augustine to write many

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<sup>1</sup> Enns, Peter, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, (Baker Academic 2005) at 10.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Volumes 1 and 2* (Paulist Press 1982), trans'd and annotated by John Hammond Taylor at 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

more volumes on the literal meaning of Genesis, but even still, in his final works, “one will encounter more questions raised than answers found.”<sup>4</sup>

Consider, for example, Augustine’s writing on what Genesis means by, “God called the light Day and the darkness Night.” Augustine could not figure out how there would be light/day followed by darkness/night. Although he did not understand that the globe was round, he did understand that the sun never truly went “out,” but instead shown over other places on earth. Without scientific certainty, yet challenging the apparent worldview of Genesis 1, Augustine wrote,

But if I make such a statement, I fear I shall be laughed at both by those who have scientific knowledge of these matters and by those who can easily recognize the facts of the case. At the time when night is with us, the sun is illuminating with its presence those parts of the world through which it returns from the place of its setting to that of its rising. Hence it is that for the whole twenty-four hours of the sun’s circuit there is always day in one place and night in another.<sup>5</sup>

Many find Genesis 1 and 2 perplexing chapters to understand literally. Some struggle to see how there was “day” and “night” or “evening” and “morning” (day one) before God made the “greater light to rule the day” and “the lesser light to rule the night” (day 4). For that matter, how does the earth sprout vegetation, fruit trees, and other plants the day before (day 3) he apparently makes the sun? Over the centuries, these issues have brought forth a number of suggested answers that satisfy some, but not all.<sup>6</sup>

Those questions were hard on Augustine and science has not made them easier! Now that we understand that night and day stem from the earth revolving around the sun, we might similarly wonder how the earth was revolving day and night without a sun to revolve around!

We want to consider what Genesis says, but even more, what it does not say. For we have a range of ways in which to understand Genesis and still hold to an authoritative view of Scripture as inerrant in conveying what God wishes to

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* at 3

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* at 30.

<sup>6</sup> For example, citing Revelation 21:23 (“And the city [New Jerusalem] has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb”) some believe plants in this world were growing by the light of God. Others counter that this created world is discussed in Genesis one and we do not see God as light in that way in this world. Furthermore, to some it seems pagan to place God into creation as a part of the physical realm rather than a Creator of the physical realm.

convey in the way God wishes to convey it. There is comfort and warning in Augustine's words,

In matters that are obscure and far beyond our vision, even in such as we may find treated in Holy Scripture, different interpretations are sometimes possible without prejudice to the faith we have received. In such a case, we should not rush in headlong and so firmly take our stand on one side that, if further progress in the search for truth justly undermines this position, we too fall with it. That would be to battle not for the teaching of Holy Scripture but for our own, wishing its teaching to conform to ours, whereas we ought to wish ours to conform to that of Sacred Scripture.<sup>7</sup>

We begin by trying to understand the Genesis account, and then consider the teachings of science.

### **Caveat**

Before we discuss Genesis 1-3 in light of science, one useful reminder is in order. This is not written from the perspective of either a scientist or a theologian. It is written from the perspective of a believer who lives in the world as a trial lawyer. I have spent over 25 years trying to ferret out and communicate truth. This calling has allowed me to examine Nobel laureates in matters of medicine. I have spent countless hours both examining and cross-examining experts in countless areas of science including mathematics, physics, engineering (mechanical, electrical, computer, civil, and aeronautical), biology, chemistry, and medicine (theoretical as well as practical). I have not become an expert in these areas (close in a few!), but I have learned to sniff out strengths and weaknesses.

As to theology, again I have no great level of established expertise. After getting a degree in Hebrew and Greek, I set about studying religious matters as part of life and teaching. I am appropriately termed an "armchair theologian," which is dangerous indeed! Still, with many decades of reading, an extensive library<sup>8</sup>, and armed with many able advisors, I venture forth to discuss the matters as I would if I were trying this case in a court of justice.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* at 41.

<sup>8</sup> The extensive library is both a blessing and a curse. The blessing is the ready resource at the fingertips. The curse is the amount of material that should be read before one might be considered even close to mastering the subject. Truly, there is an insurmountable amount that should be read on these subjects. Similarly, this lesson represents a few dozen pages on a matter that, if properly written up, should constitute a book of some length!

The goal of this lesson is not to provide “the answer.” Instead, the goal is to provide a framework and motivation for personal study and thinking. Toward that end, an annotated bibliography is provided at the end of the lesson. These are books that are readily available from Amazon or some other thorough bookseller.

## WHAT DOES GENESIS SAY?

When we consider the interplay of science and faith, the areas of scripture that are most readily implicated are those of the early Genesis stories (especially creation), as well as those of miracles and the supernatural aspects of demons and disease. So, with an eye toward science, our focus turns first to Genesis 1-3.

### Genesis 1-2:3

The creation material in Genesis is worthy of a massive multi-hundred-page tome, more so than a few dozen pages in a lesson series. Exhaustive material cannot be presented in this limited format, so our goal is directed differently. The point of this lesson is to stimulate thought and further study, rather than be a full reference. We will consider certain aspects of the passage relevant to the discussion at hand, and leave aside some of the more detailed debates.

For example, there is a debate among scholars as to whether the first line in Genesis should be translated, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (ESV) or something like, “When God began to create heaven and earth.”<sup>9</sup> Although there are some implications for the creation/evolution dialogue in which translations are chosen, it is not so significant that it is a target of this paper. We merely note that there are plenty of places to study it!<sup>10</sup> Our goal is simply to set out enough of the Creation passage to help us overview it and then to set out several of the more pronounced problem areas.

At first glance, it might seem as if there are two different creation stories. In fact, many biblical scholars assert that there are. Genesis 1-2:3 speak of the seven days of God’s creation and rest. God made light and separated it from darkness on day one. On day two, God made an expanse called “heaven” and separated the waters above from the waters below. The third day, God took the waters below the expanse (below heaven) and gathered them into one place so that dry land appeared. God called the land “earth” and the waters “seas.” God then had the earth bring forth vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit trees.

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<sup>9</sup> Alter, Robert, *Genesis, Translation and Commentary*, (Norton 1996) at 3.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, C. John, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (P&R Publishing 2006) at 50ff.

On day four, God set lights in the heavens to separate day and night, and to establish seasons. God specifically made the two great lights: the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night, as well as the stars, setting them in the expanse called heaven.

On day five, God created great sea creatures and every living creature that moves in the water. God also made the birds that inhabit the sky. God blessed the creatures and said for them to be fruitful and multiply.

Day six is when God created the living creatures of the earth. God then made man after his own likeness and in his image. God created man as male and female. As with the fish and birds, God issued the command to be fruitful and multiply.

Day seven is a day without creation; it is the day God rested. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

### **Genesis 2:4ff**

We reach now Genesis 2:4 where it seems a second creation story is given. No longer is “God” the acting subject, but now it is the “LORD God” (adding “Yahweh” – LORD – to the Hebrew for God). Chapter two speaks of the LORD God making man at a time “when no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—” (Gen. 2:5-6).

God does not provide rain until the flood, but he does make man! The LORD God creates man from the dust of the ground, breathes the breath of life into his nostrils and *then* plants a garden in Eden, placing man there. Man is given the charge of working the garden. In chapter one, God made plants on day three, and man on day six. Chapter two seems to reverse the order with man coming *before* plants. This adds to the concern of some that the stories reflect two different traditions.

Genesis two continues with the LORD God determining that man needs a helper. After giving the man time to name all creatures, God caused him to fall deeply asleep and then created woman from one of his ribs. Awakening, man named her “woman,” out of recognition that she was made like him and from him. Genesis then transitions to chapter three and the Garden of Eden story.

Closer examination of the creation passages brings out several important things. First, we should note that Genesis 1-2:3 is written in a different form or style than the rest of Genesis. The seven days passages are written in what one scholar has termed, “exalted prose narrative.”<sup>11</sup> The passages take a repetitive form that is

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<sup>11</sup> Collins at 71-72. Collins also speaks of the “poetic parallelism” and “poetic diction” of Gen. 1:1-2:3.

structured quite beautifully. Day after day begins with, “And God said...” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). That is repeatedly followed by a statement, “Let there be...” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 14) or simply “Let the...” (Gen. 1:9, 11, 20, 24). Whatever God had declared to happen, then occurs and God notes that it is “good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), and at the end of his creating, “very good” (Gen. 1:31). After each day’s creating work, “evening” comes followed by “morning” (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Here, we see that something is missing from this regimental repetition. On the seventh day, there is no note of “evening and morning following the activity of the day (God’s rest)!

There is another interesting aspect to the creation days. They fall into two easily discernable categories, those of “forming” and “filling.” On days 1, 2, and 3, God forms while he fills those forms on days 4, 5, and 6. See the relationship in the chart below.

<u>Forming</u>	<u>Filling</u>
<b>Day 1:</b> light (day) and darkness (night)	<b>Day 4:</b> the sun (filling day) the moon/stars (filling night)
<b>Day 2:</b> heavens and waters	<b>Day 5:</b> birds (filling heaven) fish (filling waters)
<b>Day 3:</b> earth/vegetation	<b>Day 6:</b> animals and man (filling earth and eating vegetation)

Again, as with the absence of “evening” and “morning,” day seven is different. It is neither a “forming” nor a “filling.” It is a holy day of rest. Reading these days in this structure shows God’s carefully planned provisions for his people. He first builds good habitats and then fills them.

With chapter 2:4, we have the first of eleven verses in Genesis to bear the refrain, *toledot*. This Hebrew word carries the translation, “These are the generations of...” Over and over, it seems to indicate a focus on material that follows as a narrowing of attention on a matter set out earlier. We might consider it as a modern chapter heading.<sup>12</sup> This is one of many factors that lead many scholars to see the creation focus in chapter two of Genesis as a microscope that intensifies the focus on the creation of man and woman, rather than simply a second or independent tradition of creation.

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<sup>12</sup> Collins at 36, 40-41; Hamilton, Victor P., *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17 (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)*, (Eerdmans 1990) at 2-11.

Once we reach this part of the creation text, the writing shifts from the high exalted, almost poetic structure of Genesis 1:1-2:4, and becomes ordinary Hebrew prose.

## INTERPRETATIONS

How are we to understand these passages in Genesis? Are they literal? If so, *how* literal? If they are not literal, what are they? How do we know whether to take them literally?

In discussing this topic, I remind the reader of my perspective on the authority of Scripture. I believe Scripture is God's revelation to man, not simply man's musings on the divine. As such, I believe Scripture perfectly reveals God in the manner in which he chooses. Our goal in studying Scripture is, with prayerful help by his Spirit, to seek God's revelation. Accordingly, I do not cover in this lesson the many possible interpretations of the Genesis passages that come from the perspectives of those who seek the work as that of man only. The possible interpretations discussed in this lesson are those that seem consistent with this view of inspiration.

### 1. "Literal"

We put literal in quotes because it takes different forms in the minds of different people. Some believe that God literally made the world in six successive 24-hour days, followed by a 24-hour day of rest.<sup>13</sup> Typically, this view also takes the genealogies and associated dating in Genesis five as literal as well, resulting in a view that the earth is somewhere around 6,000 years old.

Others take this section of Scripture as literal holding to six 24-hour days, but not necessarily considering the days successive. In this view, great time periods might have existed between the various days of creation. This is also called the "intermittent day view."

Still, another view that holds to a literal interpretation has been termed the "gap theory." This view focuses on the first two verses of Genesis:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

These verses are not seen as simply a prelude or introduction to the verses of Chapter one. Instead, they are interpreted as an independent aspect of creation

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Hamilton at 53.

that took place a considerable time before the six days of creation. God created the heavens and the earth, there was all sorts of history that occurred, and then came a destruction that left a formless void of darkness. Into this came God with the creation detailed in the following verses.

This view has some obvious strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths is the choice to consistently interpret Scripture literally unless there are strong indications it is meant to be taken otherwise. The main weakness is the difficulty in consistently interpreting it literally without making certain decisions that are not readily apparent from just reading the text, and that some consider a strained reading imposed upon the text.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, there are difficulties understanding the first chapter indicating creation of plants before man while the second chapter has the creation of man “when no bush of the field was yet in the land.”

Similarly, there are certainly challenges with the scientific aspects of our knowledge, some of which are spoken of later in the lesson, but one of which we have already seen – the dynamic of evening and morning when the earth is not rotating around a sun which has yet to be created. Similarly, light that causes plants to grow when as yet the sun had not been created. However, we should note that an interesting aspect of the literal interpretation is often overlooked. Namely, the passages tell us that the earth was told to bring forth vegetation and plants, animals, birds and fish, but it does not tell “*how* the earth ‘brought forth vegetation’ or how the animals appeared in their respective environments.”<sup>15</sup>

This has brought some to believe that the six creation days are listed in an artistic order rather than the order of creation. The numbers assigned are not seen as sequential, but rather as identifying tags. An example of this is given in comparing Matthew’s account of the temptation of Jesus with Luke’s. Matthew has Jesus tempted first with hunger, then at the pinnacle of the temple, then with the kingdoms of the world (Mt. 4:1-10). In Luke, the order is flipped. Luke has the hunger, the kingdoms and then the pinnacle of the temple (Lk 4:1-13). This, it is argued, is an example of how the Bible can record history accurately, but change ordering of events to make a point.

The point in Genesis is frequently seen as the “form/filling” structure that was set out earlier in this lesson. In that regard, Collins writes,

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<sup>14</sup> One example is a suggested literal resolution to the issue of man formed before plants in Genesis 2 while plants pre-date man in Genesis 1. The argument is that the third day’s “vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit” in Gen. 1:11 is different than the “bush of the field” and “no small plant” referenced in Genesis 2:5.

<sup>15</sup> Collins at 44.

We may simply conclude from this high level of patterning that the order of events and even lengths of time are not part of the author's focus...In this understanding, the six workdays are a literary device to display the creation week as a careful and artful effort.<sup>16</sup>

Collins later adds that he sees “the highly patterned form of this pericope [the form/filling texts] as evidence that the reader is invited to sit lightly on sequence and time lengths.” Importantly, one of evangelicalism's leading and most outspoken inerrantist J. I. Packer recommends this commentary as a “model of good reading of the text.”<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Day / Age

A second view, which is fairly called “literal” as well, is that which considers the Hebrew word “day” in the first chapter to mean an “era” or an “age” as opposed to a 24-hour day. This view stems from the fact that the Hebrew word used (*yom*) can mean a 24-hour day, an era or age, or even more limited, it can mean the time of daylight.<sup>18</sup> Our English word is used similarly today. Scripture does teach, of course, that God is outside of time. As a result, our “days” are certainly not the same to him!<sup>19</sup>

To make such a determination in Scripture, the scholar or student needs to look at the context. In the framework of Genesis, there are two dominant aspects to the text that are cited favorably by those who ascribe to this view. First is the description given for the seventh “day.” That is the only day where the day does not end! The other six days have the conclusion that would have followed the workday of any Jew, “evening and morning.”<sup>20</sup> But on the seventh day, we are

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Collins at 73ff.

<sup>17</sup> See the endorsement by Packer on the back cover.

<sup>18</sup> Hamilton at 54. The basic and most frequent usage of the Hebrew *yom* (“day”) is referring to the time of daylight between sunrise and sunset (for example, Gen. 8:22). A lesser usage, but one that is still quite common, is a full 24-hour day (for example, in Numbers 7:12-78). Further, “in many cases *yom* loses the specific meaning “day” and becomes a rather general and vague word for ‘time, moment’.” Jenni, Ernst and Westermann, Claus, ed's., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Hendrickson 1997) Vol. 2 at 527-529.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Psalm 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8.

<sup>20</sup> “Evening and morning bracket the night (see Num. 9:15 where ‘the appearance of fire’ was over the tabernacle *from evening until morning*; in verse 16, we find this paraphrased as ‘the appearance of fire [covered the tabernacle] *by night*.’ Hence, night is the period from evening to morning), and this is the daily time of rest for the worker. In Psalm 104:23, when the sun rises, ‘man goes out to his work, and to his labor until the evening.’” Collins at 77.

told that God blessed it, and made it holy because he rested on that day. We are never told that it was followed by evening and morning.

Many understand this to mean that we still live in the seventh day, the day (or “age”) of God’s rest. In this sense, Hebrews 4:3-11 is used to show the idea that as believers, we “enter God’s rest” as opposed to those who do not get that blessing:

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said... For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”... So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

This view that the seventh day was not simply 24-hours, but was an age/era carries over to the other days as well.

A second indication that is used to justify the age/era interpretation is found in Genesis 2:4:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

This passage then goes on to speak of the creation of man, the creation of plants (or the planting of the Garden of Eden), naming all the animals, searching for a mate, the deep sleep of man, and the creation of woman. Those events, it is argued, did not all occur within 24 hours and indicates that “day” is meaning something more.

### 3. Allegorical

Another way that the creation passages have found interpretation by those who ascribe to a high view of Scripture is as allegory. This was especially prominent in the early church in Alexandria (see church history lesson 17 at [www.Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com)). In that time and place in church history, those who read the story as simple literal history were deemed to be placing a lower view of Scripture’s inspiration, for common people could write history! God would have written something much deeper, so it was reasoned.

The main advantage of taking the passages allegorically, is that there is then no problem with any consistency or scientific challenge. Once the road of allegory is chosen, anything goes! Of course, that is also the main disadvantage to taking it allegorically – anything goes! Can there be certainty of anything, unless somewhere Scripture gives us the allegorical interpretation? This view has not kept the prominence it once enjoyed in the early church, but it is not without

adherents today. Even some who take a literal understanding at times see allegorical understandings of the texts. Much like Augustine, they question how the passages make sense unless the “light” created includes an idea of the spiritual insight God creates in an individual.

A related idea is to see the account, at least of Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a poetic expression of God’s theological message, rather than a recitation of science or history. Hence the pattern of the days as form and filling, the parallel structure of the writing, is seen as an indicator of an artistic painting, rather than a historical recording. Much like the Psalms that sometimes use poetry and picture to paint images, the passage in Genesis 1:1-2:3 is read for its message over its history.

#### 4. Historical Context

Another way of viewing the passage is in light of its historical context. This view seeks to understand the text first as written in the language and culture of the initial recipients. We know from Scripture that the Jews were cognizant of the culture around them. They often strayed into the idol worship of their neighbors, constantly fighting to return to worship of God (see 2 Kgs 11:18-28). Similarly, they sought a king because “all the nations” had one! (1 Sam. 8:5). We should expect that the Jews would be aware of the origins and creation stories of their neighbors. We have a number of those stories to read today, thanks, in part, to King Ashurbanipal!

In 630 BC, Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (668-627BC) ruled in his hot, dry capital city of Nineveh. The king had a tremendous library with thousands of clay tablets, the “books” of his day. These tablets covered most every subject, from the mundane to the fanciful (legal tablets, transactional tablets, *etc.*). Of course, the king died, his empire crumbled, and time overcame his library, burying the building and its contents. Then, in the mid to late 1800’s, archaeologists discovered these tablets, and scholarship of the Old Testament has never been the same. They provide insight in a number of areas, including creation myths of Israel’s neighbors.

Earlier in this study, we discussed two of these contemporary creation stories, which are found in the clay cuneiform tablets, called the *Atrahasis* and the *Enuma Elish*. In these stories, we read how the gods were created. The gods first efforts are to fight chaos and bring order to the world. As the gods continue to multiply, they do all sorts of human things, though on a grander, more god-like scale. There are working gods who dig the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, piling up the dirt into mountains. There are warring gods, who fight against each other, hacking one dead goddess into two and hurling half of her body into the sky to form the dome of heaven.

In these stories of Israel's neighbors, the gods each have possession over the aspects of creation they either made or came to own. So the god who owns the storms has jurisdiction and control over the weather. The god who owns the sea is the sea. The god who has possession of a certain area of the earth can be both in that earth and also presiding over that part of earth.

In these stories, man is made to take burdens off the gods because the toil involved in the gods' hard work on earth starts to wear on them!

Radically, into a culture and community of this sort comes a creation story that is as opposite as possible. There is one God, not many. God is not made; he is the maker. God does not war against chaos in an effort to bring order; God creates the world in an orderly fashion, forming and filling in ways that are "very good." God does not simply make one aspect of creation to inhabit and rule over. God makes all of creation. He makes everything. God is not relegated to a certain piece of real estate; he presides over all there is. Creation is not a part of God, nor an aspect of his body. Creation is independent of God, something he spoke into being.

God did not grow weary of creating. He was not challenged in digging creeks and rivers or in building mountains. God made all with simple words. He rested not out of fatigue, but because his work was finished, and it was "very good"!

Man was not made to relieve God of burdens; man was made in God's image to enjoy his fellowship and company. God made man and gave to man! In the words of John Collins,

God made the material world as a place for mankind to live: to love, to work, to enjoy, and to worship God. The exalted tone of the passage allows the reader to ponder this with a sense of awe, adoring the goodness, power, and creativity of the One who did all this.<sup>21</sup>

The historical context view sees the Genesis account as setting out the truth of God and his creation, not in the sense of science and history, but in the sense of story that teaches a competing truth to the stories surrounding the Jews.

### *Incarnational Analogy*

Peter Enns has another way of expressing the historical context perspective. Enns expounded on a view set forth by Patterson Smyth in the late 1800's that Enns has termed the "incarnational analogy." Enns writes that just "as Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible."<sup>22</sup> Enns then points out that Christ came into a culture

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<sup>21</sup> Collins at 78-79.

<sup>22</sup> Enns at 16.

using the language of the people, the manners of the people, the customs of the people, and was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17). So too, Enns sees the Bible:

Because Christianity is a historical religion, God’s word reflects the various historical moments in which Scripture was written. God acted and spoke in history.<sup>23</sup>

He sees the fact that the Bible was written in common tongue, the ordinary human language of the day, as substantiating his position. So Enns sees the Genesis texts as likely intended to contrast stories like the *Enuma Elish*. Enns does not believe the focus should be “history vs. myth” but rather “message vs. message.”<sup>24</sup>

We should note that this section is not necessarily exclusive from other interpretive views. Many holding other views recognize that the proper starting place for understanding the passage is the message’s meaning to its first audience. That said, Enns argues against a literal/scientific view believing it would be a misunderstanding to make Genesis a scientific view. In his mind,

It is wholly incomprehensible to think that thousands of years ago God would have felt constrained to speak in a way that would be meaningful only to Westerners several thousand years later. To do so borders on modern, western arrogance.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, contrary to Enns’s belief, most who hold to a literal/scientific view would not agree that the message speaks only to those of the scientific era.

### *Creation as a Temple*

Two professors at Wheaton have published another interesting analysis of Ancient Near Eastern thought that they believe point to a different original intent behind the Genesis creation account (this is yet another aspect to the historical context view). John Walton received his Ph.D. from Hebrew Union College, a very strong school for learning Hebrew. He teaches Old Testament at Wheaton College and has authored a principal text on comparative studies of the Hebrew Bible with the other contemporary cultures in the area of Israel.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Enns at 18.

<sup>24</sup> Enns at 53.

<sup>25</sup> Enns at 55.

<sup>26</sup> Walton, John H., *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Baker Academic 2006).

His counterpart at Wheaton is New Testament professor, and Chair of Biblical Studies at Wheaton Graduate School, G. K. Beale. Beale served as President of the Evangelical Theological Society and is a well-published scholar on biblical studies. He has written on this subject in a book concerned with the erosion of inerrancy in evangelical churches.<sup>27</sup>

Walton's book sets out the worldviews, the cultural mores, and the competing belief systems in an effort to give original sense to the Genesis stories. He notes that God is communicating in the stories, but,

Effective communication requires a body of agreed-upon words, terms, and ideas... For the speaker [God] this often requires accommodation to the audience. One uses words (representing ideas) that the audience will understand, thus, by definition, accommodating to the target audience... As interpreters, then, we must adapt to the language/culture matrix of the ancient world as we study the Old Testament.<sup>28</sup>

Put in the context of creation, Walton asserts that comparative studies (comparing Genesis to other stories like the *Enuma Elish* or *Atrahasis*) are important for three reasons. First, it gives more data to help us understand the text. Second, it also helps us defend the authenticity of the text as it fits into its age in Scripture. Third, it gives us insight into the exegesis of the passage.

Walton notes that comparing the creation stories to the Babylonian and Assyrian myths gives a number of distinctions similar to what we give earlier in this section. Walton then goes further. He argues that the Jews had a similar view of the cosmos to those of other contemporary cultures. He explains a three-tiered cosmos with water locked in the heavens above the hard inverted shell that is the sky (Clouds cover the "windows" that open up in the sky allowing some of the heavenly waters to fall upon earth.") Mountains hold up the sky. The sky has the track for the sun, moon, and stars. Earth itself is a disc that sits on pillars above other waters. Underneath the waters and the earth is the underworld. Walton asserts that we read this worldview in the Genesis creation account as we read God speaking to the early Jews in their language and mindsets.

Walton, and especially Beale, then go into great detail explaining that the picture painted by the Genesis stories are pictures of the world and creation existing as a big archetype of the Temple for God's dwelling. Eden functions as the holy of

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<sup>27</sup> Beale, G. K., *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority*, (Crossway 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Walton as 19-20.

Holies which man is sent from because of sin. There is much more to their theories and their books are referenced for those who wish to study their ideas.

## COMING

As this lesson continues, we next probe the current state of science and the experts' ideas of creation, biology, and paleontology. We will consider evolution, creative design, intelligent design, as well as straightforward creation. These ideas will be weighed against the scriptural interpretations set out thus far.

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“In the beginning, God...”* (Gen. 1:1).

God. Not man. Not matter. Not chance. God. John will echo this passage over a thousand years later writing, “In the beginning was the Word” (Jn 1:1). God is at the start, at the start of anything and everything. Take time this week to see things and contemplate the divine. Think about the One who is before all things and over all things. Is there any part of your life that should be without God?

2. *“And God said...”* (Gen. 1:3ff).

Over and over God speaks. Regardless of how you understand his revelation, he reveals himself as a God who speaks. When he speaks, it happens. Whatever he speaks exists. It is that simple. God is a communicating God who transforms with his words. God has spoken to you and to me. Ask yourself where he speaks and what he says. Write it down, chew on it, and pray about it. Do not think for a moment that God cannot speak into your life exactly what you need.

3. *“And it was good.”* (Gen. 1:10ff).

All good gifts come from God. Ask yourself what good things are in your heart, in your life, in your family, in your past, present or anticipated in your future. Thank God for each of them. They are not accidents, nor are they of your creation. They are from God.

## WANT MORE?

Do the next section of work for me! Think through and email me your thoughts on how the various views above will interact with the various views of science and philosophy about origins. Email me at [wantmore@biblical-literacy.com](mailto:wantmore@biblical-literacy.com).



# **Biblical Literacy Class**

## **WE NEED YOU !**

### **Advertising/Newsletter** – Sandie Shiver

- Prepare weekly “rolling announcement” PowerPoint used before class
- Prepare monthly newsletter, flyers, and advertising aids for the class
- Prepare special video clips for use during class to advertise events and activities

***NEED 3 PEOPLE***

### **Audio/Visual** – Mike Hudgins

Two rotating teams that set up and operate all equipment for light, sound, video, and special effects. This includes:

- Manning cameras to capture video during class and for use on the website
- Control room operation to coordinate what is shown on the various video screens in the room, switching between cameras, PowerPoint, overhead, pre-prepared material
- Lighting for classroom and stage
- Sound board for pre/post-class background music, audio during class, microphone set up
- Connect equipment used on stage each week such as overhead projector, switching equipment, and monitors

***NEED 6 PEOPLE***

### **Champions Angels** – Billie Dumas

A Hospital Visitation Ministry - teams of two people visit hospitalized CFBC members.

### **Child Care** – Jane Lacey

Man the childcare table before class to assist class members with signing up their children for church-provided childcare during church activities.

### **Connection Groups** – Dwight & Andrea Kadar, Ricky & Marcy Shipp

Connection Groups are small groups of class members who meet outside of class for fun, fellowship and service. Connection Group leaders also provide feedback and offer help to other groups.

***NEED 8 LEADERS FOR NEW GROUPS***

### **Greeters and Guests** – Rebecca Roberts

- Greet people as they arrive and leave the class
- Pass out lessons as people arrive
- Follow up guests for four consecutive weeks after visiting the class by handwriting cards, personal phone calls, and emails.

**Inreach** – Tracy Martin

- Provide meals for class members who are ill or recovering from surgery. Sign up add your name to a list of people contacted by email when needs arise. On average, you will provide a single meal once every three months.
- Occasional needs involve transportation to/from doctor appointments, or general help for class members who are ill or otherwise in need.

***NEED 36 PEOPLE***

**Lessons** – Linda Hudgins

Picks up the lessons at the church each Saturday and move them to the class to be ready to hand out Sunday morning. Each person will pick up lessons for a month, two times per year.

***NEED 2 PEOPLE***

**Military** – Kathleen Houser

Collect and send items to our men and women in the US military

**Missions** – Lorraine Hibbert

Keep our class connected with different opportunities to serve on the mission field locally. Coordinate all aspects for local efforts and class mission trips.

**Outreach** – Jim & Diana Brewer

- Car Care - one Saturday per quarter. It is a ministry to widows and single parent moms with minor maintenance to their automobiles. We always need volunteers who are handy with cars.
- Gospel Lakes – one Saturday per year at Gospel Lakes Ranch in New Waverly. Spend the day playing and interacting with underprivileged children to share Christ's love with them.
- School supplies – once per year in August for single parents in our class

**Prayer** – Louis Miori

Collect prayer needs of class and distribute to the class prayer network.

**Secretary/Attendance** – Melna Moriarty

Perform physical count of class attendance each week, collect all attendance rosters after class and turn in to church office.

**Setup & Take Down** – Ken Thompson

All activities needed to get the class ready each week:

- Setting up Information Table, assembling Roster Notebooks, placing Row Markers (note: chairs are set by the church facility crews)
- Arrange for pickup and delivery of donuts to class
- Coordinate weekly chair arrangement needs with the church facility department.
- ***NEED 6 PEOPLE***

**Sketches** – Melna Moriarty

Write and perform sketches used during class to highlight special events and activities.

**Social Activities** – Pat Hooker, Stacy Craber

- Coordinate the Annual Christmas Party, Summer Picnic, Movie Night, plus other class-wide social activities.
- Oversee ticket sales for events.

**Website** – Larry Burgess

- Update all content on the class website including event dates, newsletter postings, blogs, class lessons, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- Edit the audio and video lessons each week and upload them to the website
- Remove animation from PowerPoint lessons and convert to PDF format, convert handouts to PDF format, and upload PDFs to the website.

***NEED 8 PEOPLE***

**Women's Ministry** – Stacey Janssen

This is a brand new ministry that will focus specifically on the needs of the women in our class through Bible studies, a new single women's Connection Group, Girl's Night Out, and our (now) annual Ladies Retreat.



## HERE'S HOW TO VOLUNTEER !

Send an email to:

[volunteer@Biblical-Literacy.com](mailto:volunteer@Biblical-Literacy.com)

with your name, phone number, and desired area of service

- OR -

Complete the form below and put it in the basket as you leave:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the areas of service you want:

Advertising/Newsletter (3)

Audio/Visual (6)

Champions Angels

Child Care

Connection Groups (8)

Greeters and Guests

Inreach (36)

Lessons (2)

Military

Missions

Outreach

Prayer

Secretary/Attendance

Setup & Take Down (6)

Sketches

Social Activities

Website (8)

Women's Ministry

Suggestions for additional areas of ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

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