

Genesis week 3
The Rock of Ages vs the Ages of the Rocks
1:1-13

What is the most controversial topic in the Bible?

- Miracles
- Virgin birth
- The natures of Christ – the God Man
- Evil and suffering and the Goodness of God.
- The end of the world – is there really a hell and a heaven?
- Is Jesus the only way to God?

There are many options to choose from, right?

What does that tell us?

That the Bible speaks to SIGNIFICANT ISSUES that resonate deeply with our lived experience as human beings.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. 6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. 9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Two of the significant issues or questions are:

We want to know where we came from? EX: ANCESTRY .COM

We want to know that there is some meaning to life in general and to our lives in particular -

EX: We'd like to think that most people won't be looking at their watches at our funeral.

We hope that there is something pleasant after death-

Ex: Christian M in France. A confirmed non-Christian who believed in a secular model – "We're just the result of random evolution, there are no real absolutes, we live, we die, and that's the end."

And that's what bothered him- that when he dies and his wife and kids die, then that's it. There's nothing more. IF YOU ARE CONSISTENT WITH THAT VIEW, IT becomes disheartening.

Two weeks ago I said that the four most important words in the Bible might well be, "In the beginning, God.." They MAY ALSO BE the most controversial words in the Bible because they introduce the creation narrative of Gen 1-2. That topic has been a source of great debate for quite some time.

Creationists debate evolutionists.

Six-day creationists debate extended day or gap theorists.

Both of those groups might debate theistic evolutionists.

When most Evangelicals think about the opening chapter of the Bible, they think about all the

controversies that surround its interpretation. Did God create the world in six ordinary days? Were the “days” of Genesis 1 great ages or epochs? Or is Genesis 1 a somewhat poetic, non-historical celebration of God’s creative activity?

All of these positions are acceptable within evangelical circles.

If my understanding is correct, there are some varying Creationists viewpoints that are affirmed in our own denomination, the PCA. Although my own view is that Genesis 1 teaches that God made the world as we know it today in six ordinary days, not all Bible-believing Christians hold to this view.

There is perhaps a false dilemma and debate between what some would call the literal vs symbolic ways of interpreting Genesis. If we are consistent, we would say, “Yes. I take Genesis literally. It is lit-er-a-ture. The whole of scripture is literature so we must take it literally. In most literature authors use various ways to communicate the point they want to make. So too with Scripture. Some of it is narrative; some is poetry, some is prophetic, some is apocalyptic, some is indicative, and some is imperative.”

As we look at Genesis, or any book, we are obliged to read the text as it is written. “The issue is not really about our spin or interpretation of the text but our submission to the biblical text’s factual and authoritative representation. Do we believe the Creator’s authorized, factual portrayal of how God created all things, or do we prefer to believe modern scientists’ dubious and shifting representation of how all things self-assembled beginning billions of years ago, including both the world and all living creatures and plants that populate the earth? Which is the authority for our confidence? On what authority does our faith rest concerning the beginnings of God’s creation?” - Ardel Caneday

The key phrase is “our faith.” Let’s be honest and admit that there is a faith dimension to any view of Creation. We weren’t there and we can’t verify any view through a scientific or historical method. We all hold to some sort of faith viewpoint, and that’s OK, as long as we’re honest about it.

Who gets the benefit of the doubt – God’s Word or shifting word of philosophers and scientists?
WHICH VIEW FITS OUR REALITY BETTER? – The world was created with and for a purpose or We’re just here by a cosmic accident and life has no real meaning?

“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.” C.S. Lewis – Mere Christianity

A secular naturalistic approach doesn’t even have the categories to explain the inner longings or emotions of the human heart, other than to say that they are a chemical or neurological response to some sort of stimuli.

My approach in looking at some ‘themes in Genesis’ is to consider the why, or the purpose, of the Historical – Redemptive narrative of the Books of Moses. I’ve mentioned how he wrote these books to his original audience – the people who were delivered from slavery. “He wanted to remind them of their historical identity as the Covenant people of God. But more than that, Moses wrote to influence Israel to conform themselves to God’s will.” (Pratt The Primeval History – Third Mill.org)

Moses is setting the pace in showing us that scripture, God’s holy Word, is not just about information, but it about transformation. It’s not just about doctrine, but it is also about practice. It is about belief or faith working itself out through love (Gal 5:6).

Dr. Richard Pratt of Third Mill ministry is very helpful in understanding the context and purpose of the Biblical narrative given through Moses. Remember that Moses was raised as the grandson of Pharaoh. He was educated and trained to be among the ruling elite of Egypt. He would have been familiar with the social and religious customs of Ancient Egypt and the ancient world. Other cultures of the ancient near east had primeval myths and epic stories of the beginning of time. During the 400 years of bondage, the

Israelites would have been exposed to such myths and stories.

Through his writings, Moses is putting the focus on the one true God, Yahweh, who led them to freedom. **Moses is affirming the plan of Yahweh in the face of those who grumbled about going back to Egypt. The creation and deliverance narrative showed that Moses was leading the people to follow God's design for the created order and for them as a people.**

Moses understood that it is one thing to give information about God, but for the people to know God's nature and character, Moses used narrative stories to communicate what God is like. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is very different from the sensuous pagan gods of the other ANE cultures. The majesty, purity, creativity, grandeur, justice, and grace of Yahweh come out in the narratives of Gen 1-11.

As we approach the first two chapters of Genesis the focus is not so much on the technical details of creation as the purpose and result indicated by the literary structure.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SCIENCE?

What About it?

First, I contend that we are not dealing with hard science here. We are dealing with scientific theory that can never be tested.

If we are talking about something that happened long ago, we are talking about History which means we have a different approach.

For most of human history, the ancient scholars gave little thought to the "issues of science" related to Creation. Those concerns came to the forefront in the age of Darwin, evolution, and naturalism. Again, we are not dealing with issues that can be tested or verified by a scientific method. We are dealing with issues that carry with them certain worldviews and presuppositions. That's why I dealt with that last week.

WORLDVIEW IS DESTINY – it determines how you will live your life.

There are differing views and timelines among creationists just as there are differing views and timelines among evolutionary naturalists.

<https://theaquilareport.com/graciously-making-the-case-for-a-literal-genesis-account-of-creation/>

Writing in "Amazing Truths, How Science and the Bible Agree," Dr. Michael Guillen explains that "astronomers have concluded that dark energy comprises some 68 percent of the total universe and dark matter about 27 percent. That means only 5 percent of the entire universe is visible to us! That astonishing revelation bears emphasis. **Everything we call scientific knowledge is based on a pittance of what there is to know about our world. Ninety-five percent of it is hidden from us.**"⁵

I THINK it is fair for all sides of the debate to say that "We don't know what we don't know."

When it comes to the narrative of Genesis, both creationists and secular naturalists may be overlooking the main point. **WHY WAS THIS ACCOUNT WRITTEN?**

It wasn't to primarily answer the Israelites' questions about the past and the age of the universe, although that was the big picture context.

IT WAS TO instruct them about how THEIR past was part of the big picture of the Sovereign Creator and Covenant making God.

Moses is more concerned that the people know the Rock of Ages than the ages of the rocks. – Gregory Rummo

<https://theaquilareport.com/graciously-making-the-case-for-a-literal-genesis-account-of-creation/>

The structure of the Creation narrative is designed around the phrase, "And God said" v. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14,

20, 24,

After “And God said” we then get a description of what God did or what was made or brought forth, i.e. what God saw.

NOTE: the perspective is Geo-friendly. Everything is done for the sake of the earth and what happens on the earth. God is creating a paradise or home for mankind, made in His image.

EX: God is building his ‘dream home’ for his soon to be created Vice-Regent v. 26-28

I WANT TO INTRODUCE SOMETHING THAT I’LL COME BACK TO NEXT WEEK...

The Creation narrative unfolds with two sets of three Days 1,2,3 then 4,5,6 (Two Triads)

The structure of the narrative deals with the key words “formless and void”

The literary structure shows the breakdown of Days 1-3 and then 4-6.

The latter group corresponds to the first group, i.e. 1-4, 2-5, 3/6. There are interconnections between the Triads of Days.

Days 1-3 deal with formlessness by shaping domains

The first Triad, or three Days, brings order out of three spheres or domains.

Light/Darkness,

Waters above/Waters below,

Dry land of Earth

Days 4-6 deal with the void or emptiness as God creates the inhabitants for those domains.

We’ll come back to this next week, but those issues are NOT THE PRIMARY FOCUS. Moses is not trying to answer the questions of 21st century readers. Gen 1-2 doesn’t try to answer all the questions that might have been raised in 1500 BC or 2023 A.D.

The author is interested in ultimate issues and causes and in the God-centered nature of the world and human life.

SO WHAT???

As we close, I note that this creation narrative points to the New Creation narrative of our own salvation.

The Creating God is the Converting God as He shines the light of His glory on our hearts.

2 Cor 4

2 Cor 4:6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Apart from God and His Word we are in darkness, formless and void.

When God speaks, His words create what He says.

He works that way with us when He calls us to faith and to life in His Son. He dispels the darkness of unbelief in our souls. He saves sinners.

Chad Bird...

Conversion is another act of Creation. He brings forth life and brings us into His kingdom by His grace and His power. He drives away darkness and replaces it with the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

By God’s saving grace and Word of truth, we are new creations in Christ Jesus through faith.

2 Cor 5:17

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

As we COME TO THE TABLE we are reminded of what God has done to bring about the New Creation in our lives.

The creation of Gen 1 didn't really cost God anything. He spoke and it came to be.

But for us to become New Creations, it cost the life of the Eternal Son, the Lamb of God.

1 Pet 1-20 Eph 1:4

Before the foundation of the world, before the Creation of the Garden, The Triune God chose us in Christ and planned to bring His light into the darkness of our souls so that we might have the light of life.

The Creation account of Gen 1-2 points to the New Creation in Christ.

The elements of the Lord's Table point us to what Christ did to redeem us so that we might become new creations for the glory of God.

RESOURCES:

<https://christoverall.com/article/concise/the-creators-authorized-realistic-account-of-creation-interpretation-of-genesis-1-3-is-neither-literalistic-nor-figurative/>

<https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/PRH>

<https://bcnewton.co/2016/11/23/the-process-of-creation-genesis-12-25/>

<https://bcnewton.co/2016/11/23/the-process-of-creation-genesis-12-25/>

"A matter of Days" - Hugh Ross

<https://thenewamerican.com/us/tech/over-1-000-scientists-openly-dissent-from-evolution-theory/>
from 2019

Over 1,000 doctoral scientists from around the world have [signed a "Dissent" statement](#) expressing skepticism about Darwin's evolution theory, sparking fresh controversy over an idea that is at the core of many people's worldview. The significant announcement, made last month, has been all but ignored by the establishment media. But it is making waves nevertheless.

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