

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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GENESIS CHAPTERS ONE TO ELEVEN

A. The evangelical position regarding these chapters

The traditional evangelical position is based on total faith in the Word of God. Hebrews 11 v 3 states: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” This is a foundational text for the Christian worldview of origins and that whole chapter concerns the essential role of faith for every Christian. However, it is crucial for us to see that every other worldview is similarly based on faith because no human being was present during the process of creation. Of necessity the analysis of the past by science is very different to the disciplines of present-day science. The great tenets of scientific investigation are that an event or process should be testable, observable, and repeatable. Nothing that occurred before human history began is capable of being submitted to these criteria. Whatever belief system people may adopt, the past has to be taken on the basis of faith and to argue otherwise is really quite dishonest. For all the claims that are being made today for evolutionary views of origins, the reality is that such man-made views are not based on proven facts. Rather, they are suppositions based on hypotheses that completely undermine the witness of the Bible and deny the power and nature of God, or even His very existence. This is no position for a committed Christian to take; indeed, no Bible-believing Christian needs to take it at all.

Since the completion of the full canon of scripture, and especially since the Reformation, evangelicals have regarded the Bible as the full, final, and sole authority for the revelation of God’s truth and for Christian belief and practice. It is inerrant from beginning to end (2 Timothy 3 v 16). The Bible is clear and unambiguous, as it provides its own system of interpretation and understanding, taking one passage with another. Therefore, we are not free to pick and choose which parts of scripture we accept or reject (Revelation 22 v 18 -19). As the Word of God, it is authoritative on all matters on which it touches, including origins. Nowhere does the Bible say that these early chapters of Genesis are only describing the “why” of creation, leaving others to explain the “how”. It tells us how it all came about, as well as why. And if God did not mean what He said, why didn’t He say what he meant? If this part of scripture is unreliable, what other parts are suspect? It is the Word of Almighty God, and how can we dare to argue that He is telling us partial truths or even myths? Surely that is blasphemy? Sadly, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are ignored or reinterpreted today because the Bible is being made subject to the apparent authority of man’s philosophies, even by many in the Church. If this were not so we would not be questioning the literal accuracy of these chapters. Man’s opinions must always be submitted to the authority of God’s Word, and God will inevitably have the last word. Nothing will change from what He has said and that will always prove to be the truth (1 Corinthians 1 v 19 – 25).

B. The literal truth of Genesis chapters 1 to 11

1. These chapters are to be read as history.

These eleven chapters provide a foundation for the rest of scripture. They are not poetry or allegory, and certainly not myth. The Hebrew structure and form of these chapters are written as narrative - informative history. Poetical and other structures are very different. Psalmists, prophets, Jesus, Paul, Peter, Jude; all made reference to these chapters as containing historical facts. Denying the literary construction of these chapters as history is such a dubious point of view that it provides no sound reason to reinterpret the plain facts of the creation and flood accounts.

2. Creation took place just a few thousand years ago.

The Bible provides a wonderful outline of God's whole sovereign plan from before creation until the final redemption of everything (everything, that is, except fallen angels and unregenerate humans). As His clear purpose is to give us an authoritative history of time from eternity to eternity there cannot be hidden and unaccounted-for gaps of millions of years, or earlier creations (other than the implied spiritual creation of angelic beings, e.g., Job 38 v 4 – 7). If there were huge hidden gaps, the Bible would not be an authoritative history book. Genesis 1 v 1 is introductory, setting out the overall fact of creation, and the first part of Genesis 2 v 4 concludes the description of creation. Between these two statements the process of creation is described from the establishment of time, matter, and energy (1 v 1 - 3) to the concluding day of God's rest. Time through history is then divided into eras (dispensations), and we live at the end of the Church era. The length and details of the period between the Testaments were foretold through Daniel and thus the Old Testament eras can be dated by the comprehensive genealogies in the New Testament. These show that the man Jesus, the second Adam, was in an unbroken line of descent from the first Adam.

3. The days of Genesis 1 are periods of 24 hours.

The days are not indefinite periods of time. Yom, the Hebrew word for day, occurs many hundreds of times in the Old Testament and with very few exceptions it always means 24 hours. On the odd occasion where Yom is used figuratively to describe a longer period there is a different construction altogether, but that is not the case in this chapter. The repeated phrase "evening and morning" demonstrates that each day's creation events happened during a single revolution of the Earth. We are learning that every part of creation, from the vast cosmos to the smallest organism, is totally interdependent (symbiotic). Therefore, the whole creation had to be completed almost immediately for it all to function. In the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20 v 11) the reference to six days of creation only makes sense if the days are 24-hour periods. In any case this was a divine statement, as it was God Himself who wrote the tablets containing these commandments (Exodus 24 v 12 and 31 v 18).

4. Adam and Eve were real people, and the Garden of Eden was a real place.

They were the first humans, and no other humans were created separately. Every human who has lived subsequently is "in Adam" (1 Corinthians 15 v 22). Even Eve was created from Adam's body and so was also "in Adam". Humans were a special creation, separate from all the animals, made in God's image and enjoying a unique relationship with Him. They were given responsibility for the rest of creation (Psalm 8 v 6), being accountable to God. In a beautiful world, mankind's birthplace was the Garden of Eden. It is described in Genesis 2 as an area of outstanding natural beauty, occupying a large area somewhere in the present-day Middle East. This showed God's desire that man's natural habitation should be a place of extreme beauty, the utopia that man has dreamed of ever since, but cannot recreate due to the spiritual barrier set by God (Genesis 3 v 24). Also, in chapter 2, Adam and Eve's relationship was the God-ordained pattern for human sexual activity. Interestingly, the Bible starts and finishes with gardens, as the recreated universe will be centred on a city set in and around a beautiful garden containing features from Eden (Revelation 21 and 22).

5. Adam and Eve's fall into disobedience led directly to the universal Curse.

The Fall was a real event, brought about by Satan appearing in the guise of a snake. Mankind's subsequent disobedience towards God - original sin - became endemic to human nature (Romans 3 v 23, 5 v 12 - 14). God's resulting curse upon Satan, Eve and Adam has brought about a devastating dysfunction in the created order of things that will only be remedied finally and completely by God Himself (Romans 8 v 19 - 23). The foundation for God's legal authority to do this was laid through the atoning work that Jesus completed at Calvary as the second Adam. He was made a curse for us and those who truly put their trust in Him are then redeemed (Galatians 3 v 13 - 14).

6. The Flood was a world-wide cataclysmic event.

The catastrophic Flood and its aftermath caused the mass extinction recorded in the fossils, with the only survivors being the humans and animals in the ark. Jesus certainly believed in the literal accuracy of the Flood (Matthew 24 v 37 - 39), indicating that it "took them *all* away". The entire global geography, geology, topography, climate, etc, were all fundamentally changed as a result of the Flood and its aftermath. By a sovereign act of their Creator, animals arrived at the door of the ark, with all the pre-flood kinds represented - even dinosaurs (very young specimens?). The great number of worldwide legends and traditions of a flood are well documented and bear witness to the global nature of the event. Noah's ark was the prototype of the place of refuge God in His grace always provides for those who truly repent and turn back to Him from their disobedience, with the ultimate refuge being established in the person of Jesus on the cross.

7. The nations and their languages were ordained by God Himself.

The promotion of man's self-glorification, known to us today broadly as Humanism, led to the building of the Tower of Babel, which in turn led directly to divine intervention with the creation of the many different languages (Genesis 11 v 9). By this means nations were born and spread out to colonise the whole Earth. Again, the worldwide existence of stories referring to the division of languages gives powerful evidence of this event being historically true.

C. Three essential biblical doctrines that confirm these chapters

1. The transcendent glory of God's power and nature.

Romans 1 v 20 tells us that creation demonstrates God's eternal power and divine nature. He is therefore beyond time, space, and matter. While He clearly established the characteristics, boundaries, and laws upon which the universe operates, His glory is seen in His transcendent authority over His creation - using, altering or even suspending those parameters as and when He so chooses. Throughout the Bible we see this happening time and time again. Creation and the Flood are obvious examples; the creation of the nation of Israel in a single night in Egypt is another. Israel's experiences in the wilderness and their possession of the Promised Land, together with so many miraculous events throughout their Old Testament history, continued to demonstrate God's glory. In the New Testament we read "The Word became flesh", a supreme and miraculous act of glory. We see the authority Jesus had over evil spirits, disease, the elements, the creation of vintage wine, meals for thousands, death (especially in the case of Lazarus), etc - *each in an instant*. At the cross the Lord's triumph over sin and Satan's power, legally and experientially, together with His subsequent resurrection, are amazing examples of God's glory. This will continue with our own physical and eternal re-creation "in the twinkling of an eye" at the Rapture, the removal of the "bondage to decay" throughout creation, and the future eras of the Millennial reign and the eternal New Jerusalem. In the meantime, we have seen the miraculous transformation of our own lives through the new birth (2 Corinthians 5 v 17) and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, especially in times of awakening, outpouring and revival. We echo the heartfelt words of Isaiah 64 v 1 - 4.

2. The full deity of Jesus.

John 1 v 1 - 4 gives us the basis for Jesus' deity. He is the Logos, the Word, the source of all life. Without that Word nothing was created. As the creator of all life, He Himself must be beyond created life; thus, He is God, not a created being. We now understand that the reality behind all biological life is information (words), known as DNA. In every organism every cell contains all the information needed to make and sustain that organism. Therefore, each organism exists in the form as planned by Him who put the information there in the first place. In fact, Genesis 1 explains that each "kind" was created uniquely and with purpose. This clearly shows it could not be biology evolving by chance from one type of organism to another because such a process would be a denial of the sovereign Word, depriving Jesus of the divine authority described by John. As Colossians 1 v 16 - 17 states, *all* things throughout the universe are held together by Jesus who created them, conclusively demonstrating that He has left *nothing* to chance.

3. The absolute necessity of the Gospel.

This issue can be summed up with the question: "Did death come before sin or did sin come before death?" The reason for the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus is that God had to deal legally and vicariously with the situation in which humanity finds itself. Adam's sin had driven an immense wedge between himself (and his descendants) and God. The consequence was death - eternal separation from God's presence both spiritually and physically. As Adam was steward of creation, and an intrinsic part of it, the principle of death became an inevitable feature of the whole creation, the ultimate curse. The New Testament is quite clear that without Adam's disobedience death would not have come into creation (1 Corinthians 15 v 21 - 22). That is why there had to be a means of re-establishing the relationship that originally existed between God and man; atonement was required. The whole matter clearly implies that a long period of creation did not take place. Firstly, original sin could only have occurred on a very short time scale, before any child of Adam and Eve was conceived, with sinful nature thereby entering the human race. Then, if the days of creation were longer periods of time, with even accidental death occurring before Adam's fall, the gospel is totally irrelevant and unnecessary. Indeed, it is only logical that some Christians, having denied the literal account of creation, go on to deny the need for the atonement. To go a step further, if creation took thousands or millions of years, with "the survival of the fittest" as the process by which God brought the orders of creation into existence, then He was Himself the author of suffering and death, not man through his disobedience. This strikes at the heart of God's gracious nature and the perfection of his handiwork. It also sets Jesus against His Father because the ultimate triumph of Jesus is to destroy death, the last *enemy* (1 Corinthians 15 v 26 - 27). But if death was the Father's great idea to achieve His creation then Father and Son are in severe conflict with each other; an untenable position.

D. Conclusion

In the light of all this truth, why should we even think of denying God the glory of creating the whole universe in the first place in exactly the way He said - in six days approximately six thousand years ago - even if it now shows an *appearance* of greater antiquity? This is Peter's argument in 2 Peter 3 v 3 – 7, where we read that in the last times scoffers will deny God's presence (parousia, 'coming', means presence as well as arrival) and will forget the *power of His word*. Their view will be that the processes of nature have continued unchanged since the beginning of creation (material uniformitarianism), and that they do not need God as an explanation for creation's origin or continuation. Peter goes on to say that God's dramatic interventions, such as the Flood and future fire, will put an end to all such atheistic thinking. Why, then, should any Christian have anything to do with these God-denying views today?