

Genesis Chapters 1-11

Summer 2010 Adult Bible Elective

Jeff Blick

Author

- The traditional view is Moses
 - Not challenged until late 19th century
 - Held that the Pentateuch was put together at a late date from several different sources
- Use of written and oral sources
- Later editing
 - Abraham's rescue of Lot in Genesis 14:14 refers to the city of Dan
 - The city was not named Dan until Judges 17 & 18
 - The death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34

Original Audience

- The nation of Israel
 - Written during their travels from Egypt to the Promised Land
 - After 400 years of slavery in a pagan, polytheistic country
- Genesis reminds Israel who God is and that He is all powerful

Pentateuch

- First 5 books of the Old Testament
- The Pentateuch is about the fulfillment of the promises that God made to Abraham
 - Genesis 12:1-3
 - Land
 - Seed or great nation
 - Blessing
- Genesis 1-11 provides the history from creation to Abraham

Historical Narrative

- Historical: Genesis speaks about real events that have happened
 - Christianity is based on the historical event of the incarnation of Christ
- Narrative: The author writes with intentions beyond just describing past events
 - Details are selected to provide meaning
 - We learn about the nature of God, the nature of man and our relationship with God

Structure of Genesis

- “These are the generations of” or “This is the account of”
 - Phrase repeated 10 times in Genesis
 - Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:27; 25:12; 25
 - Traditionally this phrase is thought to occur at the end of a section

Science & Theology

- Science studies the world which God created
- Theology studies Scripture which is the word of God
- These are both human endeavors
 - Therefore they can contain errors

Science & Theology: Conflict

- Science & Theology are enemies
- Conflict is inevitable
- Theology corrects science
- Associated with Young-Earth Creationism

Science & Theology: Confirmation

- Science & Theology are allies
- Conflict is impossible
- Science & theology are mutually confirming
- Associated with Old-Earth Creationism

Science & Theology: Contrast

- Science & Theology are strangers
- Conflict is illusory
- Science & theology are both self-correcting
- Associated with Theistic Evolution

Science & Theology: Contact

- Science & Theology are associates
- Conflict is possible
- Science & theology are mutually correcting
- Associated with Generic Creationism

Creation & Evolution

- Macroevolution: evolution at or above the level of species
- Microevolution: evolution below the level of species
- The lion, the tiger, the jaguar and the leopard are all different species

Creation & Evolution: Young-Earth Creationism

- No Evolution
- Many miracles in creation
- Cosmos is thousands of years old
- Literal Adam & Eve
- Conflict view of science & theology

Creation & Evolution: Old-Earth Creationism

- Microevolution only
- Many miracles in creation
- Cosmos is billions of years old
- Literal Adam & Eve
- Confirmation view of science & theology

Creation & Evolution: Theistic Evolution

- Macroevolution
- One, two or three miracles in creation
 - The beginning of the universe, the beginning of life & the human soul
- Cosmos is billions of years old
- Possibly no Adam & Eve
- Contrast view of science & theology

Creation & Evolution: Non-theistic Evolution

- Macroevolution
- No miracles in creation
- Cosmos is billions of years old
- No Adam & Eve
- Science is true & theology is false

Interpreting Genesis One

- Plain-Day View: Young Earth Creationism
 - Six 24-hour days
 - Genealogies in Genesis 5 & 11 provide a way to date the creation of Adam
 - Global flood effected the earth's geology
 - Traditional view through most of church history

Interpreting Genesis One

- Day-Age View: Old-Earth Creationism
 - Six consecutive long days
- Gap Theory
 - Original creation occurred in Genesis 1:1
 - Satan's fall occurred before Genesis 1:2 and marred creation
 - The rest of Genesis 1 is a restoration of creation

Interpreting Genesis One

- Edenic Creation
 - Genesis 1 is the creation of the land of Eden only
- Intermittent Days Theory
 - Six 24-hour days during which new stages of creation were begun
 - These days are separated by long periods of time

Interpreting Genesis One

- Revelation Days Theory
 - Six 24-hour days during which God revealed to Moses how He created the world
- Framework Hypothesis
 - The six days of creation represent orderly creation but are not necessarily chronological

Interpreting Genesis One

- Cosmogonic View
 - Genesis 1 is a religious and theological statement about creation
 - Genesis 1 is not concerned with material origins
 - Advocated by John Walton
 - *The Lost World of Genesis One*
 - Existence in the ancient near east was about function rather than material existence
 - Genesis 1 is about making things function

Structure of Genesis 1

Correspondence of days 1-3 and days 4-6 of creation

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Location | • Inhabitants |
| • Day 1: Light & Dark | • Day 4: Lights of Day & Night |
| • Day 2: Sea & Sky | • Day 5: Fish & Birds |
| • Day 3: Fertile Earth | • Day 6: Animals & Man |

Structure of Genesis 1

- Repetition of common elements during the days of creation
 - Introduction – ‘and God said’
 - The creative word – ‘let there be’
 - Fulfillment of the word – ‘and it was so’
 - Naming – ‘God called’
 - Divine commendation – ‘and God saw that it was good’
 - The concluding formula – ‘and there was evening, and there was morning – the ____day’

Genesis 1 as Polemic

- A polemic is an attack on or refutation of the principles of another
- The Biblical creation account differs significantly from other ancient near eastern creation stories
 - There is only one God rather than many gods
 - God is over all things rather than having a limited sphere of influence
 - Humanity has a special place within creation

Genesis 1:1

- Ex nihilo
 - The creation of all matter out of nothing
- Some interpretations of Genesis 1:1 have God use preexisting material for creation
 - In the beginning when God created the heavens and earth, the earth was a formless void... (NRSV)
- John 1:3 also affirms that God created ex nihilo
 - Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Genesis 1:1

- 'created'
 - The subject of this verb in the Bible is always God
 - The Hebrew word is also used in Genesis 1:21 & 1:27
 - The word appears to be used interchangeably with the word make in Genesis 1:26-27 & 2:4
- 'the heavens and the earth'
 - Merism: a figure of speech where two opposites are used to represent everything in between
 - It means the totality of the universe

Genesis 1:2

- ‘earth’
 - The Hebrew word can mean either earth or land
- ‘formless and empty’
 - This phrase is used to support the Gap Theory
 - In Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11 it is used to indicate the state resulting from God’s judgment
 - However later usage does not determine earlier usage
 - ‘formless and empty’ indicate that creation is not fully ordered yet
 - It is not suitable for humanity

Genesis 1:2

- ‘the Spirit of God’
 - This is the traditional translation and it is preferable
 - In some modern translations such as the NRSV it is ‘a wind from God’ or ‘a mighty wind’
- ‘hovering’
 - Indicates a readiness for action

Day One

Genesis 1:3-5

- 'day'
 - The Hebrew word has three definitions
 - The 24 hours of one day
 - The period of light during a 24 hour day
 - An indeterminate period of time
 - All three of these definitions occur in Genesis 1 & 2
 - Genesis 1:14 – 24 hour period
 - Genesis 1:5 – Period of daylight
 - Genesis 2:4 – Indeterminate period of time
 - 'in the day that the Lord God made...'

Day Two

Genesis 1:6-8

- 'expanse'
 - It is called sky
 - It contains the sun, moon, stars as well as the birds
 - It is everything that is above the land
- Things are described from the perspective of a person standing on the ground
 - The earth or land is the place for people and animals
 - The sea is the place for fish
 - The sky or heaven is everything that is above

Day Three

Genesis 1:9-13

- 'God saw that it was good'
 - This is the first time that God has declared something good during creation
 - The land is good because it is the place where people will dwell
 - The vegetation is good because it will provide food for people

Day Four

Genesis 1:14-19

- God creates the sun, moon & stars
 - In other religions these were different gods
 - Here they are all under the one true God
- 'let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years'
 - These lights give rhythm to life

Day Five

Genesis 1:20-23

- ‘So God created the great creatures of the sea’
 - This is the first time that the word create has been used since verse 1
- ‘God blesses them’
 - ‘Be fruitful and increase in number’
 - This is part of the blessing that God will give to people

Day Six

Genesis 1:24-31

- ‘Let us make man in our image’
 - ‘Let us make’ is in contrast to the typical ‘let there be’
 - ‘in our image’ is in contrast to ‘according to its kind’
- ‘God blessed them’
 - ‘Be fruitful and increase in number’
 - ‘fill the earth and subdue it’
 - rule over the fish, the birds and the animals

Day Seven

Genesis 2:1-3

- The seventh day does not end with ‘and there was evening, and there was morning-the seventh day’
 - This may mean that the seventh day is ongoing
- John Walton
 - Rest is not stopping from activity
 - Rest is an ordered state that allows things to function properly

Psalm 19:1–4

- ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- ² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
- ³ There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
- ⁴ Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.