

Genesis 1 – Gen 1.1, v24-2.3; Rom 5.12-17

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Creation, evolution and what really matters.

Main Point - Believe what Genesis says about life and death, but more than debating secondary matters, point people to Jesus, who saves us from death.

I grew up in a church that didn't believe all the Bible said.(**SLIDE**)

It questioned whether some parts were even God's inspired word.

I don't recall ever hearing sermons on Genesis 1-3.

Besides Sunday school, I was not taught what the Bible said about creation.-----

And I am preaching through it, because we all need to know & believe it.

As I said last Sunday, the first 3 chapters are foundational to our faith.-----

But I was taught about where life came from in my public high school science class.

I was taught about creation in my university Biological Science degree.-----

I was taught that we evolved from primates, and lower life forms.-----(**SLIDE**)

I was taught that humans are just more-evolved animals, who through the process of natural selection, or survival of the fittest, have outperformed other species.---

My first year-uni biology text book told me that life(**SLIDE**) evolved from non-living matter, about 4 billion years ago.---

That the first living organisms, just became self-reproducing, like blue-green algae.---

So over billions of years, by random mutations, the molecules evolved into man.-----

The goo evolved in you.----- Goo to you!!-----

It was taught as fact, that I shared common ancestors with, or was related to, apes, reptiles, fish.-----

I felt uncomfortable this teaching, but I had no evidence to suggest there was any alternative.-----

I doubted we evolved from earlier primates, believing humans were special and made in God's image.

But only at uni did I really come to grapple with God's word, and think through what Genesis does say; and what it doesn't say.-----

I know some things I speak about today, will be controversial, and you may disagree.

I hope you will hear me out.-----

And I hope you'll listen, because we're thinking about matters of life and death.-----

So what does Genesis say?(SLIDE)-----

Last Sunday, we saw that God created the universe.

God made the world by his Word. Forming it then filling it.-----

He made it with order. He made it good.-----

He made men & women in his image, the pinnacle of creation, and declared all he had made very good indeed.

And we read that he made it in 6 days, **6 days, v31.-----**(**SLIDE**)

Much of the controversy when it comes to considering creation and evolution; what the Bible says versus what science says, is how should we interpret the meaning of the word '**days**' here?-----

The word 'day' in Hebrew often refers to the daylight hours, sunrise to sunset.

Or it can be figurative, for a period of time.

When figuring out the meaning of any phrase or word in the Bible we must look at the context.

What the word means in the light of the wider passage and section.-----

And yes, the word 'day' can mean an extended or indefinite period of time.

Like 'the day of the Lord', or 'day of judgement' is not a literal 24hr day.

And in ch 2v4,(**SLIDE**) day is translated as, 'the time' the Lord made the earth and heavens.

But because it has that meaning there, doesn't mean I can give it that meaning here. Can a word have the meaning I would like it to have?------(No)

Just because 2 Peter says, to the Lord, a day is as a thousand years (2 Pet 3.8), doesn't mean that's the meaning in Genesis 1.-----

And we can't let science determine the parameters for how we interpret Genesis.

I know some of us may believe the 6 days of creations refer to long periods of time, and you might describe yourselves as old-earth creationists.

And that may be the case.

Yet in the context, and considering what it would have meant for the original author and audience, the most natural reading, is understanding 'day' as a 24-hour day.

Yes, the sun and moon weren't created until day 4, v14.

But the evening and morning language, of v5ff, seeks to set up a sequence of alternating periods of light and darkness, with God's activity taking place during the light, or daylight hours.-----

Which connects God's work to that to come for human beings.

And it relates to the times of the evening and morning tabernacle sacrifices.(Ex 29.38)

Because this garden is not only a place where mankind can dwell, but where God can dwell, in relationship with people.-----

But the most convincing support comes from **Ex 20**.-----(**SLIDE**)

In giving the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai, in **Ex 20:9** God says,

⁹You are to labor six days and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God... ¹¹For the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day.

Six days a week you shall labour.----- Why?

Because in 6 days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, and everything in them.

In this context 6 days can only really mean 6 literal 24-hour days.-----

So in Genesis 1, it's unlikely that anything more than literal days was intended.-----

I am not saying how to interpret the word 'day' in Genesis 1 should be an issue we argue about or divide over. It shouldn't.

Yet we do need to let the text speak for itself, and not let scientific theories determine how we interpret scripture.-----

An important Question is how to interpret the language of Genesis 1.

What is its genre?-----

Some will argue, Genesis is poetry, and therefore we don't read it literally; but metaphorically, or figuratively.-----

Yes, Genesis 1 has repeated language, like, morning and evening, God said such and such, and that happened, and it was so. And it was good.-----

Lots of repetition; and patterns.-----

But these things alone don't determine what is poetry.-----

Gen 1 lacks all the characteristics of Hebrew poetry.

In fact, it has one key attribute of narrative literature, a piece of jargon called the 'waw-consecutive'.-----

The point is, Genesis 1 & 2 has heightened and stylized language.

It is heightened prose; not poetry.-----

We can't simply say Genesis 1-3 is poetry and therefore metaphorical.

We can't simply reject that God made the plants on day 3, sun on day 4 and animals on day 6.-----

Should I believe all animals are related, like on a giant family tree?-----

Should I believe that we evolved from Primates, through thousands of generations living and dying, when Genesis 2 says God made the man from the dust,(**SLIDE**) and the woman from the man's rib?------(No)

God made the world and all its creatures; and he made it good.(**SLIDE**)

And the world was good, until sin & death entered it.

And death is not good.

What was vital for me, as I worked through the **problem of death**, was working through **Romans 5**, which we read earlier.(**SLIDE**)

From **v12**: Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned...

And **v15**,

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by the one man's trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many.

So Romans 5 plainly says that sin entered the world through one man, Adam.

And as a result and consequence of sin, death came, to all people.

In **Gen 2** God said to Adam,(**SLIDE**) 'you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'

And when Adam and Eve did eat the forbidden fruit what happened?-----

They're cursed, **Gen 3:19**,(**SLIDE**) 'you will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken;

for you are dust and you will return to dust."-----

They could have lived forever, but death came as a consequence for their sin.

And they and all their descendants, everyone, was then born out of the Garden of Eden, separated from God's presence; and born to die.

For the wages of sin is death.(**SLIDE**)-----(**Rom 6.23**)-----

Have you ever received a speeding fine?-----

When disobey the law and speed over the limit, past a police officer, or camera, what you will earn is a fine.-----

When you disobey God and live your life as if he's not in charge, what you will earn is death.-----

Sin leads to death; it results in death, for Adam and Eve, and us.-----

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they would **not have died**, because death came as a consequence for sin.-----

Before Adam and Eve sinned there was no human death.---

There was actually no animals killing each other either.

Remember, they all ate plants(**SLIDE-1.30**)

Before the fall in Gen 3, there were no carnivores.

No T-Rex's eating herbivores, before humanity sinned.-----

The apostle Paul in Romans 5 said there was a literal man, Adam, who sinned, and a literal Jesus Christ who didn't.

30 years ago, I concluded that I couldn't believe in a literal Jesus Christ, who died to overcome sin and death, if I denied what Paul said about sin and death coming into the world.-----

Paul, who taught Christ can reconcile us to God and bring forgiveness for our sins, he is the Christ who undoes what Adam and we messed-up.-----
 Christ fixes up what Adam and Eve, and we-all ever since, have ruined.-----
 Jesus dies and rises to overcome death for us.
 Because of the righteousness(**SLIDE**), the right relationship with God Jesus gives us by faith, we can 'reign in life', live abundantly; live forever.-----
 Adam brought sin and death. Jesus brings forgiveness and life.
 So trust him today!-----
 Find the sure hope of eternal life by trusting in Jesus?-----
 If not, you'll get what you've earned: Condemnation.-----
 If you have, don't be afraid to die. Jesus has died in your place.-----

Genesis says that God made the world and all its creatures.
 And that death came into the world as a consequence for human sin.-----
 In terms of **what Genesis doesn't say**,(**SLIDE**) it doesn't claim that species don't change.---
 The word 'evolution' can mean a process of gradual development, and in this sense change and development does occur in species.
 We can speak of germs evolving antibiotic resistance.-----
 I imagine one species of **finch** on the Galapagos Islands(**SLIDE**) could evolve into multiple finch species, with different sized beaks, colours and habitats.---
 But this is different from the **General Theory of Evolution**, which suggests that all living organisms came from a single source, with more simple life forms evolving into more complex ones. That I question.
 Please talk to me after if you wish, with gentleness and mutual respect I trust.-----
 Genesis allows for the view and reality that species change over time.
 It says ch1 **v21**,(**SLIDE**) God made swimming and flying creatures to according to 'their **kinds**'. Land animals according to their kinds.-----
 'Kinds' is not the equivalent for the modern day 'species', or a scientific classification.
 The Bible is **not a science textbook**.
 It doesn't tell us how exactly God made things.-----
 Teachers like John Lennox suggest Genesis 1 & 2 speak more about the who and why of Creation, rather than how and when.
 And I agree the Who and Why are more important, but I see questions of how and when God made the world being addressed too.-----
 Genesis was not written to address our issues and our questions.
 And we ought to focus on the issues the text addresses, and focus on the main points of the text.-----
 It was written to a people in a certain time and place.----
 And written to tell a story, the true story of the true God who made us; of our fall into sin and death, and of the salvation the promised Saviour brings.-----
 And **yet** what Genesis says, when interpreted correctly, it says truly, even in matters of science.-----
 And I admit that interpreting it correctly is not always easy.-----

Coming back to the word '**kind**', it's a reference to the classification system priests used.
 You know, for the Israelites, certain animals were clean and edible, other unclean animals weren't to be eaten or touched (Lev 11).
 An Israelite could eat fish, pigeons and sheep; but not prawns, hawks or lizards.

'Kind' refers to a group of living organisms.-----

So maybe in Gen 1 God created a kind of **parrot(SLIDE)**, and they developed into the over 400 different species of parrot that exist today.-----

I'm saying that I personally believe in small-scale microevolution, **not macro-evolution.**

Not dinosaurs to birds; not bacteria to primates to people.-----

However, before coming to such a view, and while I was researching all this and checking out the organisation Creation Ministries International, I came to see that there's actually scientists, even **young-earth scientists like me** who believe the world is probably 6-10,000 yrs old, doing science.-----

Yes, even someone like me who believes there's a lack of transitional fossils and most fossils were laid down in the flood, even we can do science.-----

I can be a scientist and a Christian at the same time.-----

Our enemy is not science, but naturalism, the atheistic premise which tries to explain the natural world without resorting to the supernatural.-----

More than that, studying science can **enrich our faith** and enlarge our appreciation of God and his greatness, his glory.-----

And that's **What matters more,(SLIDE)**

God getting the praise and glory for what he has done.-----

As a former research scientist I worked with plant DNA.(**SLIDE**)

And DNA is really the building blocks of life.

I thought, wow, God designed it all, and there's still so much we don't know.

And that tells me God is absolutely amazing.-----

But I had many conversations when I studied and worked as a scientist, where people asked me: **Doesn't science contradict the Bible?**

How can you be a Christian and a scientist?-----

And I had many debates about creation vs evolution, and you know what?---

Not one person became a Christian through those discussions, no matter how gentle and respectful, or passionate and convincing, my conversation was.-----

I never out-argued someone, in a way that convinced them to become Christian.

Accepting my view of Genesis isn't going to save anyone.

Whether we are young-earth, or old earth creationists, or you believe God created through the process of evolution; or you're unsure, every view has its difficulties.

And it doesn't save you.-----

And nor can discussing such things endlessly, save anyone.-----

Sadly, some people from groups like Answers in Genesis have claimed that if you hold to an old earth, you're denying the truth of Scripture and not actually a Christian.

I totally disagree.

Neil and I held different views on the age of the earth, and it didn't change how we worked together in the cause of the Gospel, and to help people follow Jesus.-----

Bible believing Christians can believe in a young or old earth and the absolute authority of Scripture

Let's not divide over our particular views of Genesis, which are secondary matters.-----

We don't want people pushing their views on everyone.

And we need to speak with respect and gentleness, and work hard to listen well.

We can disagree, and still relate as brothers and sisters in Christ, and be part of the same church at Bundy.

It's okay to talk about these things, but not get distracted from what matters more, and what unites us.-----

Thinking about what matters more, commentator **Gordon Wenham** says (**SLIDE**), 'The Bible versus science debate has most regrettably, sidetracked readers of Genesis 1. Instead of reading the chapter as a triumphant affirmation of the wisdom and power of God, and the wonder of his creation, we have been too often bogged down in an attempting to squeeze scripture into the mold of the latest scientific hypothesis, or distorting scientific facts to fit a particular interpretation.

(**SLIDE**) When allowed to speak for itself, Gen 1 looks beyond such minute things. Its proclamation of the God of grace and power who undergirds the world and gives it purpose, justifies the scientific approach to nature.--- Gen 1, by affirming the unique status of man, our place in the divine program, and God's care for us, gives a hope to mankind that atheistic philosophies can never supply.'-----

What really matters is that people know and worship their Creator.

That they know of their sin and rebellion, that breaks the relationship & brings death. That they need a Saviour, they need Jesus.

And that they must trust him, and him alone, for their salvation.-----

So let us give them Christ, and speak of Christ and point people to Christ.-----

So when someone asked me **how I could be a Christian and a scientist**,(**SLIDE**)

I eventually learnt to say something like,

"Studying the world gives me a greater understanding of and thankfulness for the world God made. Studying DNA and organisms blows my mind when I think about how great, complex and awesome God is.-----

BUT, it also helps me to see that I have a Creator,

God made me and I'm accountable to him.

But I rejected God and wanted to run my life my own way.

And the Bible says that that path only ends in judgement and death.

But God sent Jesus to die and save me from that judgement.-----

Have you heard much about Jesus?-----

I'd always seek to briefly answer the question, but direct it back to Jesus, and finish with a question, to continue the conversation.-----

So respond briefly, redirect to Jesus and wrap-up with a question.-----

We want to proclaim good news of Jesus so people can be saved, follow him, and live every aspect of life for him - All of life all for Jesus.

To **conclude**, We need to believe that God created the world; we are sinners, and so we will die.-----

To accept the good news, people need to know the bad news first.

But what people need; Who people need, is Jesus.

Not me trying to win an argument.-----

Only Jesus can save us from eternal death and bring us to God.-----

So who can you talk to about Jesus?-----

Is there someone that's got creation questions that you could help with answers if you can, but really, re-direct to Jesus?-----

Have you remembered that what really matters is how people respond to Him?----

Praise God that he is not only the creator of all life, but that he sent Jesus to die to give us life.-----

Believe what Genesis says about life and death, but more than debating secondary matters, point people to Jesus, who saves us from death.

Let's pray.