

**Testing Understanding & Commitment
To
Biblical Authority
&
Literal Grammatical/Historical Interpretation
Using
Genesis 1-3**

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ABSTRACT: There appears to be a subtle historical drift among evangelicals, especially among newly trained graduate students, away from the traditional evangelical position of Biblical inerrancy and literal grammatical/historical interpretation. While endorsing Biblical authority, and giving tacit acknowledgement to inerrancy if asked, deeper investigation often reveals a re-interpretation of the classical position to allow for the denial of literal, historical accuracy by appealing to original language artistic intent, literary interpretation, and a much broader use of metaphor, poetic license, and figurative story-telling while affirming a conviction of Biblical authority. While this drift is apparent in many areas, such as in theological studies of Biblical authors resulting in an expression of “differing theological constructs” (*e.g.*: comparing and contrasting Paul and James in their view of faith—as if there were no unity of authorship and inspiration), it is most apparent in the understanding of Genesis 1-11, and even more particularly chapters 1-3. This results in a comfortable obfuscation of the apparent conflicts between literal Biblical interpretation and contemporary scientific theories. Consequently, Genesis 1-3 has unique appeal as a test passage for exploring the understanding of Biblical interpretation and literal reliability because (1) it directly confronts the conflict of Western empirical science and the Bible, and (2) it is more than a book of beginning about the beginning: these three chapters hold the foundational premises of every major doctrine of the Bible as understood from an evangelical and historical heritage. Indeed, if one misses the literal interpretation, significance, and accuracy of Genesis 1-3, then all of the rest of Biblical theology is rooted in the thin air of academic arrogance and will eventually crumble into a meaningless pile of archaic and passé opinion—including the doctrine of redemption. I will show in this paper why a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3 is so vitally important and I will propose that it become the test passage for exploring a candidate’s understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

Definitions & *a priori* Assumptions

Biblical Authority & Inerrancy—these two terms are taken to mean essentially the same thing in practice. While “authority” speaks more to the right of the text to guide one’s beliefs and practice, “inerrancy” speaks to the fundamental trustworthiness of the text itself. In classical evangelicalism inerrancy has been posited on the original manuscripts. In practical terms for interpretative purposes, conservative textual criticism has essentially insured that most scholarly English translations developed by linguistic teams holding reverence for the sacred text have produced versions that are reliable for all major Biblical and theological studies.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration—is the miracle of the transmission of the text of Scripture from the mind of God to the mind of human Biblical authors in such a way as to convey the precise meaning of God in specific words and sentences that human beings can understand plainly and at face value while allowing for the unique personality, vocabulary, and style of individual authors. They were guarded by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the very words of God were faithfully insured in and amongst the individualism of the authors. All of the words of all of the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible are the very words of God and can be interpreted accurately in the best historical and simplest grammatical sense.

Figures of Speech—are used throughout the Bible in the most obvious sense. They are a part of normal speech in every culture and can readily be recognized in the text as such. One cannot, however, infer figurative language for the purpose of making the most obvious meaning of the text obscure in the interest of compromise with current theories or lifestyle preferences (e.g.: evolutionary uniformitarianism or acceptance of homosexuality as a genetic variance).

Literal Grammatical/Historical Interpretation—is the hermeneutic of approaching the text of Scripture with the conviction that it is the very word of God, in fact, the very *words* of God, and can be understood by a direct exegesis which values the individual words, syntactically arranged, within a grammatical and historical context. It is the belief that each word and phrase has theological significance and that each sentence has only one true meaning in its context.

Unity of Faith—is the conviction that all of the sixty-six canonical books form a seamless whole with a single, divine Author and therefore communicate the same message. No text of Scripture can be interpreted in such a way that it directly contradicts any other obviously intended text of Scripture. No individual human author of Scripture wrote anything which directly contradicts any other human author since all Scripture essentially has the same Author. Comparative literary analysis of individual books and authors of the Bible must be undertaken within the confines of this broader understanding of the unity of the inspiration of all of the sacred text.

Final Authority for all Faith and Practice—the Bible consists of the revelation of propositional truths of timeless infallible fact and wisdom, cast in a framework of the historical narrative of the people of God, which, when properly understood in their grammatical and historical context, form the absolute and final word from God for all faith and practice, including the accuracy and truthfulness of the historical

narrative into which they are cast. These truths are progressively unveiled from Genesis to Revelation and may be collated into thematic teaching on the various emerging topics and organized meaningfully as Biblical Theology which is the task of summarizing the propositional revelation regarding each of the themes of the Bible (such as teachings about God, Man, Christ, Sin, Salvation, and Last Things, to name a few).

Exegesis and the Practice of Theology—the goal of the Biblical interpretation of the sacred text is to express the one true meaning of the text and to relate it to the teaching of all the rest of the text in such a way that accurate and eternally true generalizations can be made about the meaning of life, the existence and nature of God, and an understanding of human nature including man’s relationship to God and to other human beings. These summary generalizations are the practice of theology. Each generation is called upon to translate these timeless truths into their own culture and to apply them to the specific issues of their day in such a way that the eternally static Word of God becomes the dynamic living and powerful message of God to each generation.

The “Watershed” Value of Genesis 1-3

The story of creation and the fall of man in the early chapters of Genesis provide a watershed text for the assessment of one’s beliefs about the authority and literal accuracy of the Bible. Nowhere in the Scriptures does the narrative of faith history so profoundly confront empirical rationalism. These chapters also lay the foundation for the understanding of all of the rest of Biblical revelation about the nature of God, the story of the tragedy of the human race, and the full realization of restoration in redemption. In Genesis, chapters 1-3, the seed of the following Biblical doctrines is established:

1. A personal, all powerful Creator God existing in three Persons with intellect, volition, and emotion.
2. The creation of human beings in His image and glimpses into their original perfection in every dimension: morally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually.
3. The existence of a personal devil, the real, but limited power of evil, and the consequences and corruption of sin upon man, animal life, and the planet.
4. The hope of redemption, the promise of a Savior, and the foreshadowing of the incarnation.
5. Judgment and restoration, the crushing defeat of Satan at the cross, the glory of the resurrected Redeemer, and the recovery of paradise lost both personally and corporately, now and eternally.

These themes cover the doctrines of Theology Proper and the Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and the implicit formation of Bibliology and inspiration in the revelation of the dynamic Word of God which calls all things which exist into being—the ultimate manifestation of true truth and authority. The form these seminal doctrines take are not obscure shadows that hint at truth, but unmistakable propositional statements that clearly reveal the nature of God and His creation, man and his problem, Christ and redemption. While it is true

that they can only be fully understood in the light of retrospective analysis, this, in itself, proves the very nature of Scripture: progressive revelation and Divine authorship throughout the whole of the Bible in the analogy of faith.

When these chapters are perceived as pivotal in the test of fidelity to the historical accuracy of the written revelation, it is not merely the confrontation of empirical rationalism in the realm of the existence of the physical universe, but in the whole arena of Western materialism *versus* spiritual reality. How does one explain the flaws in human beings, or explain them away as not being flaws at all: the etiology of mental illness, the pathophysiological component of addictive disorders, the supposed genetic proclivity toward gender identity and sexual expression, to name a few? A Biblical world view literally rises or falls upon a proper understanding of the literal and accurate description of the beginning of all things as recorded in Genesis 1-3.

Unfortunately, these same chapters of Genesis have been abused by well intentioned Christians resulting in fully deserved ridicule by rationalists. Outlandish and unfounded claims have been made about what these chapters declare. Many evangelicals, and some of their fundamentalist forefathers, have gone way beyond the actual statements of the creation account, and have done so with such fervor, that they have left themselves, and the church, open to justifiable claims of ignorance, logical fallacy, and not a small amount of intellectual fear. Today there seems to be an embarrassed backlash against much of this ostrich style belief system as contemporary evangelicals seek to gain acceptance and respect in the academic community. Shame over beliefs, and declarations that have more in common with back-country snake handlers than declarations of propositional truths that can bear up under the weight of logical consistency and intellectual honesty, have left many in the church (and in the seminary) scurrying for cover under some modicum of compromise that leaves them looking less like fools before the watching world. The hope is that the compromise will make the message of salvation more palatable. In fact, it strikes at its very foundation.

It is important then that the truths of the Genesis account be carefully stated. We must not claim anything not specifically stated in the text. We must examine what is actually stated and what can logically be inferred relative to the aforementioned doctrines. Finally, it must be determined how these Biblical truths compare to current rationalistic thinking before the church can say with confidence where it affirms and where it opposes current scientific theory. In any case, Scripture must dictate in matters of faith and practice, not so that the heralds of truth may simply be right, but because “you will know the truth and the truth will set you free!” All salvation in all realms of the human condition, both now and forever, begins with a humble acknowledgement of the truth of God, followed by a changing of the mind (repentance) and a moral repugnance of wrong actions based upon false assumptions, resulting in the obedience of faith toward God and His Word. Before real hope can be offered to a lost and broken world, the church must clearly understand what has gone wrong, and the answer to that question is found in the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3.

What We Can Affirm From Genesis 1-3

More will follow, but at the outset we can affirm:

1. Ex nihilo creation. Genesis 1:1 is a statement of fact, declaring that God, out of nothing and by His own power, called the universe into existence.
2. God caused certain elements of the cosmos and particular forms of life to appear in a specific order, and while light was quite early, the sun was later in the creative week—whatever that may mean.
3. Man was formed from both dirt and spirit and made in the image of God; his existence appears to be distinct from other forms of animal life and to partake of both the material and non-material realm.
4. Only the vegetation was given to man for food.
5. There appears to be no fear or lack of harmony between humans and animal life.
6. There was no rain in the early days of the earth; it was watered by a mist which arose from the ground. (In fact, there is no apparent rain as we know it until the flood of Noah's day.)
7. Death is a consequence of sin. The first record of any death is the death of the animal(s) God killed in order to provide a covering for the shame of Adam and Eve. As such, there was no death prior to the fall. This is of the utmost theological importance and renders any form of evolution which requires a life cycle of multiple generations with death and birth Biblically untenable.
8. Adam and Eve lived in a garden and on a planet that was completely compatible and harmonious with their nude forms. They faced no danger or threat from any element of nature and were completely comfortable in the environment with no need for shelter or personal covering.
9. While it cannot be asserted that the first human couple had no work to do (there appears to be the implication of meaningful activity), it can be said that, until the time of their fall and expulsion from the garden, their work was relatively effortless and yielded marvelous and intended results. It is only after the fall that the earth becomes uncooperative and their work to survive is fraught with significant toilsome labor and frustration.

Affirmations of Scripture & Scientific Investigation

Followers of Jesus Christ who are given curious and creative minds in the realm of investigating the universe should be leading the various disciplines of scientific inquiry. There is no conflict between true science (in the Western empirical sense) and the conviction that the Bible is literally true. In fact, the man or woman of strong Biblical conviction has an advantage: they begin their scientific investigations with *a priori* assumptions which are, in fact, absolutely true, and this provides a jump start to those who begin with assumptions which are false.

Some of the *a priori* assumptions of agnostic materialistic scientists are clearly not true if one is to believe the Bible. For example, uniformitarianism (the idea that all things observable today have always behaved the same way in the past) falls completely apart if one introduces a universal flood which, among other things, changed the environment and disrupted the stability of the planet's climate. (For example, what difference has exposure to solar and space radiation had upon aging—this potential change is implicit in the ages of the patriarchs after the flood—and the validity of all dating methods currently in use?) The concept of upward evolution, likewise, flies in the face of laws of the conservation of energy, particularly the second law of thermodynamics which postulates (and is supported by repeated scientific investigation), that, while energy is neither created nor destroyed, it does become less and less useable. In other words, things are falling apart in decay at a predictable rate...not the other way around. Those who hold to these assumptions are bound to make serious errors in the interpretation of data and the development of hypotheses and theories because their foundational premises are wrong.

It should be noted that in the case of both groups of investigators, *a priori* assumptions are made which are not empirically provable and therefore must be taken by faith. In the ultimate sense, neither the existence nor the non-existence of God can be proved by the scientific method. The investigator must begin with an assumption which he or she makes on the basis of faith, and that faith is expressed as a result of one's upbringing, perspectives, and prejudices or because one has a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ as a result of regeneration. In the words of an old hymn, "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart."

Followers of Jesus who value the authority and inspiration of the Bible must ask themselves, in the total scheme of things, to what end would we want to question the literal accuracy and interpretation of Genesis? Look at the many other passages of Scripture which we affirm: later in Genesis an old woman well past menopause conceives the son of promise, in Exodus the Red Sea is parted, in Numbers 22:28 a donkey speaks to Balaam, in Joshua the Jordan is parted at flood time and the sun stands still in the sky for nearly a whole day, in 2 Kings 6:5-6 an iron axe head is made to float in a river by throwing a stick in the water, in Daniel a body-less hand writes on the wall of the palace. In other passages oil in jars never runs out though it is used daily, the dead are raised, the lame are healed and the blind see. Jesus is born of a virgin and rises from the dead and physically appears in closed rooms before rising bodily into the air. In Acts Philip is "transported in the Spirit," the sick are healed by coming into contact with handkerchiefs used by the apostles, demons are cast out, secrets of the heart are spoken out by direct revelation and Paul

survives a deadly snake bite without so much as a pause in the action. Lost people, by a miracle of grace and power are born again and totally transformed by the miracle of salvation. Does it make sense to attempt to mitigate the ridicule of unbelievers and soften the claims of the Bible by questioning the literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation when that is only the beginning of numerous physically impossible claims throughout the rest of the Bible? At what point do we begin or end our affirmation of Scripture? If God is all He claims to be and rules the universe by His will, holding all things together by the Word of His power, what is too difficult for Him to accomplish?

The affirmation of the inerrancy and authority of Scripture is the bedrock of our faith and the ultimate foundation of all that we know and believe about God and the redemption of a lost human race. Epistemology ultimately distills what can be known and how it can be known to three possible sources: rationalism, authoritarianism, and revelation. If at any point revelation is reduced to rational scrutiny in the sense of deciding what is and what is not reasonable within the revelation, then we are back to rationalism as our source of knowledge, and that takes us unavoidably to humanism. We, in our limited and finite comprehension (and if the Bible is to be believed in its essence, our sinfully and rebelliously defective powers of reason) become the final judge of truth. We have ceased to be men and women of faith and have become humanistic rationalists in every sense of the word. It is not that the Bible is in any way unreasonable or irrational...given the assumptions with which the revelation begins and the unfolding declarations of propositional truth throughout, every point is logically and reasonably coherent and pleasing to the regenerate mind. But the beginning of wisdom begins when one bows the knee in humility, and repentance, before a Holy God. He can never be found or understood by the arrogant investigation of a proud human intellect for the simple reason that He hides Himself from such wise and prudent researchers. We must start with the declaration of faith in God, and the God of the revelation, and in His words, "Let God be true though every man be found a liar."

We take care and even joy in the exegesis of Scripture, it is our delight. We must not, however, become overly analytical in our investigation of the text to the point that we make it a difficult book that can only be understood by highly trained theologians and linguistic experts. We do well to heed the wisdom of Dwight Moody when he said, "Read your Bible, it will shed some light on your commentaries." The first principle in grammatical/historical hermeneutics is to interpret every passage in the most plain and literal sense, unless there is a compelling contextual reason to do otherwise. As one of the foremost Hebrew scholars of our times has written (who himself is not a believer in the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3), "There is no question that the original author of the Genesis creation story, and the people of his day, understood the creative week in the most literal sense of six normal twenty-four hour days." (*cf*: end note)

The Importance of Genesis 1-3

Why are the first three chapters of Genesis so terribly important in the total scheme of redemptive history? Why should we make this a hill to die on in the argument for Biblical authority? Why can we not soften this "in your face" challenge to Western rationalism and all that modern science seems to affirm, and save our argument for more important themes like the blood atonement and salvation by faith? The answer, as I intend to demonstrate, is that the Bible is not a collection of loosely related stories

around a central theme of salvation; it is a coherent and seamless message from Genesis to Revelation revealing the love of God for a lost humanity that literally begins at the beginning, in Genesis, and does not end until the end in the Revelation. Every single aspect of redemption, every point of theology, has its root and is ultimately understood in the light of Genesis 1-3. The message of redemption in its fullness is a story of paradise lost by a man and then recovered by a Man. If you take away any part of the literal truth of the Genesis story of creation, then you leave some other part of the full message of redemption hanging without foundation or meaning. In fact, if you miss Genesis you will never fully understand God's purposes in redemption, and to the extent that you do not understand His purposes you will also fail to appreciate what He is about in your life, the life of your fellow believers, and the Church. Your preaching and teaching will lack the full context and you will be more likely to err in your applications of theology. Lacking a true Biblical worldview, you will tend to interpret life in a reactive and disjointed way.

Let's begin at the beginning and see what we had, what we lost, and what God is about in the recovery we call salvation and redemptive history:

The key to understanding the significance of the Genesis account of the beginning of the kosmos and human history is understanding the fundamental meaning of salvation or redemption. The concept of salvation has healing or restoration at its root. The idea is that to be saved is in some way to be restored to a condition of wholeness and health in every respect. The usual sense of receiving eternal life and gaining a place in heaven is only the tip of the iceberg. I would go so far as to say it misses the mark entirely. Eternal life is not something that comes in the future after death. It is a present tense entering into the life of God Himself and thereby being, in the initial instance, restored to fellowship with God through a new birth, a coming to life, of the human spirit with respect to God. This is an immediate recovery of the initial loss in Adam when he sinned. He instantly died spiritually, the Spirit of God vacated the premises, so to speak, and Adam and Eve were suddenly devoid of eternal life, the life of God within. The new birth recovers this loss, but it is just the beginning of the total recovery project God has in mind as full restoration of the individual, the redeemed of the race, and the lostness of the kosmos is undertaken in the process of full salvation. Redemption has a similar focus, but is more occupied in its emphasis with taking back what was lost, bringing it home again, restoring it to its rightful place and condition. In this sense, not only man is redeemed through the cross, but all of creation shares in that redemption and eagerly awaits the full manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8) because it heralds the redemption of nature and the earth as well.

We must see this over-arching theme of recovery and redemption stretching throughout the whole story of God's love for lost people. His aim is not merely to rescue from sin, death, and hell—that does happen in the process, but to restore to the fullness of all that was lost in the fall. In this respect we note that at the end of human history as measured in time we have a new heaven and a new earth. Why a new earth? Because it is the redemption and recreation of what was lost and is now recovered. We also celebrate the promise of a bodily resurrection. Why is this important if we are going to float off into a merely "spiritual" heaven? Because we lost our bodies to death in the sin of Adam, and they are recovered (redeemed) in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of the great errors of the prosperity movement is the

concept that we are destined to become like Jesus Christ. The problem is not in the basic declaration, for it is true that we will be like Him. The problem is in the misunderstanding that we can become like Him in His deity, that we can become like God. That was the lie of Satan to Adam and Eve, and is still the lie of Satan today. The genuine Biblical promise is that we will be like Him in His resurrected and perfected humanity, born unto the Second Man and the Last Adam. It is a promise of restoration to the original with the glorification to follow. To understand where God is going in the redemption story, we must have a clear picture of what was lost in the Garden and what is recovered at the end of time as revealed to John. With this ultimate aim as the total context of the Bible, all of the doctrines of the Bible make sense and find their foundation in Genesis 1-3 and their consummation in Revelation 21. To deny the literal truth of either end is to leave the rest of the Biblical revelation like the cliché, “having both feet firmly planted in mid air.”

Bibliology & Theology Proper

What then does Genesis 1-3 tell us about God and man, and the rest of theology? Implicit in the opening verses is our understanding of the inspiration of the sacred text and the essential nature of God Himself. The Bible begins with the simple statement, “In the beginning God...” and never bothers to prove or defend His existence—it should be obvious to any thoughtful observer, except for the blindness caused by sin. We also note that a curtain is being drawn back to reveal a time and place and a sequence of events that no human being could ever know or discover with any degree of certainty apart from divine revelation. No historical investigation, however sophisticated, and certainly no true science, can ever hope to uncover with any real accuracy how things actually began: only Someone who was there when it happened and who possesses both perfect knowledge and the ability to communicate with human beings could accurately inform us of the facts about the beginning. We also discover that this God who is about to explain things to us by divine revelation is triune: He is there in the beginning, He did not become or begin Himself, and He is simply there, the eternal One. His Spirit is brooding over the shapeless beginning that is to be the modeling clay of the creation and His Word is reverberating in the darkness, unveiling the Light. This is not poetic imagination. John practically states these very things in the preface to his Gospel. And so, in the opening verses we are about to learn things we could not know without inspiration and revelation coming from a God who is triune in His essential essence, the fact of His Trinitarian nature also being revealed again throughout the creation event, “Let Us make man in Our image...God created man in His own image.”

In addition to gaining insight into God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence as well as His transcendence and eternal being, we also learn from the account that He is good, that He makes good things and makes them very well, perfect in fact. He is the Author of life itself and every living thing. He is not the Author of death--that comes later in the story. He is a God of order. He has logic and sequence. He likes things to be beautiful, growing and fruitful. We learn that He is personal and personable, He speaks within His triune self and He walks and talks with man in the garden. He is benevolent as He provides for man and all animate life and He is kind and tender in that His provision for food is limited to non-animate life, the vegetation. In the episode of the fall we discover that He is just and Holy and will not tolerate sin. Yet He is merciful and gracious as He Himself provides the very first sacrifice to cover

the shame of the guilty pair and sustains their physical life so that someday they can come back home by repentance and faith. All of these things and more about the nature and character of God are clearly seen in the first three chapters of this amazing revelation we call the *Book of Beginning*.

Anthropology

In the creation account the undisputed climax of the week is the creation of human beings. The story is primarily about God and man: who we are, how we came to be, why we are here, what went wrong, and the hope of someday getting back to Eden. Man is made in the image of God, he bears His likeness. We know that this is not a physical likeness because God is Spirit, but it is a likeness in personality, thoughtful choice, and emotions. Like Him we are a sort of trinity, the material dust of the earth infused with the Breath of God becoming something more than either or both, a person who stands above and over the rest of creation for whom it is all made, and who is made to rule with the same benevolent care as the Creator. A man who stands between the physical earth and the God of Spirit, separate from both but a part of each, possessing both the material and the spiritual and having the faculties of sensing and communicating with both God and the world. He is the only one with this innate characteristic of living simultaneously in both realms. He too has keen powers of observation, discrimination, and articulation as he discerns between the species and gives a name to every animate creature. He is designed to oversee and to manage the gifts of God. He has the power of reason and the ability to choose, even to choose to leave the God who made him in order that love might be real and voluntary and not simply an illusion. He is a free moral agent. We discover that Eve was not simply fashioned again in the likeness of Adam from dust and Spirit, but that she was actually taken from the very essence of his being and that he is only complete in union with her. In the intimacy of this union they walk together with God as divinely appointed stewards of His creation.

Ecclesiology

It is also in the creation of the first couple that we are given divine insight into the nature of the church, and in the union of male and female we glimpse the ecstasy of worship and union with God. Much later down the road we learn that marriage is a type of Christ and His Church. This is not a symbol chosen retrospectively but rather created originally to give us a picture of the intimacy, joy, and unity that is to exist between God and human beings through the Person of Jesus Christ and by His Holy Spirit. We learn that Jesus is the “hidden Man of the heart.” We learn that we are His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. We rise to the sublime heights of spiritual rapture as we become one with Him in the new birth and worship Him in the Spirit, indwelt and infused by His presence. As we walk with each other He walks in our midst. We have fellowship with one another and with God.

Hamartiology & Soteriology: Past, Present, and Future

Only as we understand how man was made in his essential being can we understand the powerful message of the Gospel, the full salvation, and the deeper and higher life that is promised us in Jesus Christ. Much later, as the story unfolds, we are told that the real essence of death is separation from God

while the real essence of life is union with God. In fact, life only exists as an extension of God's essential being (in Him is Life), and death is being cut off from that Source of Life. Never mind that people breathe and walk around. In truth they are zombies, the walking dead, and they will stay dead forever unless somehow they can be re-infused with Divine Life. God breathed His Breath, His Spirit into man and he came Alive. It is no accident that man was created at the end of the sixth day and that the first thing he did as that day drew to a close was to lie down in a perfectly safe world in the arms of his Creator and wake up in the Sabbath rest of God as light dawned in the seventh day. We were made to live out of the rest of God, to live our lives out of the peaceful abode of His presence, to abide in Him.

All of the deeper life teaching of the entire New Testament seeks to open our eyes to this Sabbath rest of God that is available for the people of God. We were designed to be Spirit filled, God indwelt tabernacles of His presence in this world and the entire world was to abide in peace and beauty under our Spirit controlled administration of the creation. Those of us who hold precious the doctrine of the deeper life must realize that the best model of its reality, apart from Jesus Himself, is in the garden, in Adam himself, in the fact that his first day of life was the Sabbath rest of God. The Sabbath was made for man—we know that God had no need of rest. If we do not understand the original design, we will never fully comprehend the goal of the redemption.

In the day that Adam and Eve chose their own way, to separate from the heart and will of God and to become (or so they thought) autonomous, they truly and really died. They did not stop breathing. God was kind and merciful staying His hand of final judgment, but exactly as He who cannot lie promised, they died that very day and instant. That death was separation from God and was made unmistakably clear as the Spirit of God left their bodies, and the flame of their human spirit, now devoid of the Oil of His Presence, went out. Everything changed. Now they hid from God, now they cowered in shame, now they blamed each other and everything else, now they were expelled from the garden, now nature is no longer responsive: it does not yield to them, it does not obey, it resists their cultivation and the ease of the work they once did in God becomes the arduous chores of fleshly effort fraught with futility. Soon nature attacked them. The walking dead became susceptible to the decay of death as bacteria, virus, even their own bodies, turned on them and sickness crept upon them with aging and decay. But the real death was in their soul, as spirit no longer in communion with God, cut off and withered, gave way to fleshly influence. The mind was darkened, the emotions convoluted, the will captive now to a new power, a cruel and evil monster holding the chains of sin that bound them dragging them down to their ultimate physical death. They were not autonomous by any stretch of the imagination; they were prisoners of sin and death facing an eternity of death with nothing but the memories of their evil and futile lives to haunt them while the wrath of a holy God consumed them forever.

All of the kosmos changed that day. God had made man the ruler of the world. In a very true sense Adam was the god of this world as God Himself was God of the universe. Adam and Eve, in perfect harmony and submission to their loving Creator, gave oversight and dominion to the beautiful, peaceful, marvelous planet that God made just for them. Adam sold the title deed and gave up that right when he unwittingly bowed the knee to Satan. Even though Satan is the father of lies, his habit is to hide the lie in a half truth. It was no lie that day in the wilderness when he offered the Second Man and Last Adam all

the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him...they were his to give because the first Adam had sold out this world and turned over the keys to the new manager, to the new god of this world. (In fact, it is no mere coincidence that all of the temptations of Christ mimicked the first temptations: {1} good for food / stones to bread – the lust of the flesh, {2} pleasant to behold / all the kingdoms of the world – the lust of the eyes, {3} desirous to make one wise / everyone will worship if you leap from the temple and fly safely to the earth – the boastful pride of life.) Furthermore, we cannot afford to underestimate the transformation that occurred throughout all of nature when the authority of earthly rule was relinquished to the enemy of our souls (and more of that later in eschatology), but we catch a glimpse of how he transformed the beauty of the serpent into the most sinister and hideous of creatures and the consequences that have lasted until now.

Salvation begins the process of recovering the amazing life that was lost. Our sin is covered and actually removed, not by the ineffectual blood of animals, but by the blood of the Lamb of God. As the tabernacle of God is truly cleansed, He is free to return once again to His dwelling place among human beings: the human spirit (the Holy of Holies within the holy place of the soul within the outer court of the human body). The Last Adam has risen from the dead and giving birth to a new race, sons and daughters of God once again. His Spirit returns home as we are regenerated. We are invited once again to abide in Him, to enter again into His Sabbath rest, and from that position of quiet trust, to allow the indwelling Spirit to be the filling Spirit who empowers us to do His work in the fields and vineyards of this world, yielding eternal fruit in the lives of men and women.

With respect to the nature and essence of sin, we also see in this record the reality that the wages of sin is death. It caused instant spiritual death and separation from God followed by a deadness of soul bringing selfishness, jealousy, anger, even murder, and finally leading to the death of the body. Sin leads to bondage rather than autonomy. It brings shame and emotional separation from God and requires a covering which God provides by shedding the blood of one of the animals and placing the blood stained skin upon the man and his wife. The leaves of vegetation would not suffice, as Cain and Able were painfully to learn just a little later. We cannot miss the fact that this is the first death recorded in the Bible, the death of the animal(s) God killed to cover their shame. The Bible is very clear on this subject, “through one man sin entered the world, and death by that sin, and so death has passed upon all men” (Rom 5:12). Do not miss the profound implications of that middle phrase: death came into this world because of Adam’s sin. It did not exist before that day. There was no death. God made everything good. He is the Author of Life, not death. Death is anathema to His being. Nothing of soulish, animate life died before that moment when Adam sinned. There can be no evolution of the species over millions and millions of years if there is no death before the fall of man. Death is not a beautiful thing, a wondrous component of the cycle of nature fertilizing the earth and giving rise to new life. It is stinking, rotten, ugly, heart-breaking, stench and decay, foul food for worms and maggots. The predator pouncing on the prey is not a thing of beauty—it may be awesome, it may be amazing, it may command rapt attention—but it is not pretty in any sense of the word, and it certainly was not part of God’s original plan.

We who preach this glorious message of the good news of Jesus Christ must comprehend the whole story. We must see from whence we have fallen in order to proclaim the goal and fullness of God’s salvation.

We must discern what has gone tragically wrong in this vile world—and why—in order to proclaim with meaning the hope of redemption. God has set about through His Son, the Second Man, to recover all that was lost, to bring us back to Eden, to finally redeem the whole lost creation and let us once again walk with Him, and with each other, eternally, in a garden paradise called the New Heaven and the New Earth. Meanwhile, that glorious eternal life can start right this moment when we are born again and His Spirit comes home to His earthly tent once more.

Christology

We are introduced to Jesus Christ for the first time in Genesis 1:3. God called all things into being by the Word of His Power. John, who takes us deeply into the mystery of the Word of God, introducing Him as the pre-incarnate Jesus of Nazareth, tells us plainly that He was in beginning with God, not *the* beginning (the definite article is not present)—just *beginning*, any beginning, all beginnings. He was there before any beginning. “In beginning was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and apart from Him was not any made that was made. In Him was Life and the Life was the Light of men....” He is the Agency of creation; the Word God spoke to bring all things that are out of nothing that was before. He is present in the discussion of the Father and the Spirit as the creation of man is undertaken. Most evangelical scholars agree that all theophanies in the Old Testament are actually Christophanies—pre-incarnate appearances of the Son of God in human form; God walked with the first couple every day in the garden, most likely Jesus Christ with them in the same way as He did much later with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We have the unmistakable foreshadowing of his incarnation and the hypostatic union of God and man in the Man Christ Jesus as the *protoevangelion* is pronounced in Genesis 3:15 and the work of atonement is prefigured in the sacrifice that covers the shame of that first sin. More than just the cleansing of the atonement, but being hidden with Christ, being in Christ, as the skins of the animal cover them and clothe them...we are clothed in His righteousness. He may even be present in the Tree of Life as now we eat of His flesh and drink of His blood and are partakers of the Divine Nature, “I am the Bread of Life.”

He is also incarnate in human form. As John says again, “He pitched his tent among us.” Like the first man, the Second Man was spiritually alive (in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit and abiding in the presence of God in communion of spirit and soul) and without sin from the moment He was planted in the womb of Mary. Like the first Adam, He came to life as a Man, matter coupled with Spirit, a living Person (“that which is in you is out of the Holy Spirit”), God living in and through the Man as Adam was intended to live. Jesus never did one thing on this planet during His earthly sojourn on His own. Not one act or deed was a product of autonomy. Every thing He ever did was what He saw the Father doing, wanting to do, and was a product of the power of the Holy Spirit within Him. He never acted upon this earth out of His deity but exclusively out of His Spirit indwelt and controlled humanity—exactly the way Adam began and was intended to live forever. Jesus the Man manifested God the Father perfectly because no sin or self ever polluted the flow of the Holy Spirit dwelling in and living out of His Holy of Holies, just as Adam and Eve were containers of God before the fall. Even the wind and the waves obeyed Him just as all nature was submissive to their every command and responded to their every desire. (What else does

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." mean, if not that? Gen 1:28)

In the creation account, in the Trinity, in Adam, in the garden, and in the sacrifice and promise after the fall Jesus permeates the first three chapters of Genesis. It is the prelude to the unfolding story of God's plan to redeem the lost of Adam's race through the glorious central Character of all the pages of the Bible: Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Pneumatology

We are also introduced to the Person of the Holy Spirit in the second verse of Genesis. His ministry then was moving through the darkness over the surface of the deep, proceeding from the Father and from the Son to bring Light into the darkness, to call order out of chaos, to fashion beauty out of a formless and empty lump. His ministry is the same today. It is He who is exhaled from the Eternal Being into the earthly dust transforming it into a new person alive unto God and indwelt by His Presence. As Adam breathes celestial Breath he begins his life in the Sabbath rest of God. It is just the same in the new birth, as the Spirit moves to regenerate us, to indwell us, and to bring us to rest once again where we can at last cease from our vain efforts and "trust Him all for us to do." The whole doctrine of regeneration, sanctification, and the deeper life is presented in these early chapters of creation if we have eyes to see.

Angelology, Good and Bad

Amazing things can be learned about our wicked enemy and about the powerful spirit beings who serve God and us just by reading these first chapters. We learn that Satan exists and that he is a person, not merely a force or principle. He is a liar, but not a blatant one. He is a clever deceiver who presents lies wrapped in truth, who accuses and introduces jealousy, awakens unholy desire, and steals our very life away while we watch and even agree to participate. He can exercise control over nature and commandeer the body, mind, and voice of an animal. To us in the west this seems a strange and far fetched story, but many people from the dark depths of animism and spiritism in other parts of the world less arrogant can testify that he is still at his old tricks. We infer his goals by examining the results: he separates God and man; he invokes the justice and holiness of God by setting up a fall that requires His judgment. Satan's effort brings the entire kosmos under both the judgment and curse of God while wresting away the right to manipulate and control the forces and creatures of nature for his own evil purposes—for he is now the god of this earth and has the dominion over the powers of the air.

We are likewise introduced to another class of powerful spirit beings as cherubim appear with the flaming sword to close off Eden and guard the way to the tree of life. As the rest of the story unfolds in the pages of Scripture we learn more and more that we are not alone on this planet. Myriads of angels, hoards of demons, and various spiritual forces of good and evil roam the earth and fill the heavens, each serving their head as the fierce battle rages for the eternal destiny of men and women.

Eschatology

Perhaps more than any other doctrine that arises from these first pages, the doctrine of last things and the end of the age makes no real sense unless we have a clear understanding of how things started and what they were originally like. God is taking us back to where we started, and the end only makes sense in light of the beginning. There is also perhaps no other doctrine that is so dependent upon the literal interpretation of Genesis 1-3 as the doctrine of the end of the age and the coming of Christ. In fact, it really makes no sense to attempt to interpret eschatologic prophecy in any literal sense if we do not anchor it in the beginning and in God's goal to recover what was lost.

The earth before the fall was a very different place. We discover in reading the account of creation that there was no rain, but a mist arose from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. In fact, we do not hear of rain until it comes down in buckets as the fountains of the deep are broken up in the universal flood. There is a strange division of the waters above the earth and the waters below the earth with heaven in between. Without becoming dogmatic, the description sounds rather like the ecosystem of a tropical terrarium, a greenhouse. It certainly would explain how Adam and Eve could live without clothes and not be uncomfortable and why we have discovered fossil fuel deposits at Antarctica and tropical vegetation in the digestive tracts of woolly mammoths frozen whole in Siberia. We also learn, though admittedly not in the first three chapters but in the fifth, that the human lifespan was vastly different: hundreds and hundreds of years until Methuselah tops the list, dying in the year of the flood at the age of 969. Is there less exposure in this first millennium to harmful radiation and infection? Is it a climate which protects from the ravages of disease and vastly retards the process of aging?

Another remarkable fact of the early earth was the solely vegetarian diet of man and all the animals. Meat is not introduced into the diet until after the flood. (We know today that there is a close link between the need for protein and the rebuilding of cellular damage—back to that radiation and aging business.) Finally, we note that there was no death prior to the sin of Adam—none at all. Lions and tigers and bears and wolves ate grass alongside the oxen and lambs. We may believe that they were all household pets of that first couple in a house without walls that was perfectly and beautifully suited to a life of comfort and delight and safe from attack, harm, dangers, disease, and death. Paul tells us in Romans 8:20-23 that all of creation groans, yearning in distress for a time when this safe and restful harmony will be restored, a time when the sons of God will be manifest.

One thing is for sure, if we accept the Genesis account as literally true, any *a priori* assumption of uniformitarianism as a key to understanding the past fails completely. Before the sin of Adam and the universal flood the earth, its environment, and the natural world and animal kingdom were nothing like they are today. But they will be again.

Another Man, a Second Man, the Last Adam will one day reign upon the earth. After a horrible period of cataclysmic change in the last years of the great tribulation the sun and moon will change once more and

the eco system of the earth will be drastically altered. The Great Son of Man, that King of Kings and Lord of Lords will place His feet upon the Mount of Olives. In the company of all his Holy Ones (Dan 7:27) He will establish a Kingdom that will last a thousand years and He will have dominion over all the earth. He will show us how it was supposed to be! Someone who dies at a hundred years of age will be considered a youth and assumed to be cursed (Is 65:20), "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," (Is 65:25). Although it is pure conjecture on my part I cannot help but wonder if some child will be born on the day of His arrival who will live, like his ancient counterpart, the whole thousand years!

A literal understanding of a thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth in the tradition of historic premillennialism really makes no sense out of the context of redemption and restoration of Eden. God is recovering what was lost. The arch enemy will be bound for this entire period and the Last Adam will reign, and we with Him, so that we can bask in the glory of what God intended life to be. Still, it isn't over until there is finally a last judgment, until the devil and hell, all the wicked angels and rebellious sons of Adam are cast into the lake of fire and banished to the outermost boundaries of the universe and God ushers in, of all things, a New Heaven and a New Earth. And what do we find there but a tree of life bearing the fruit of salvation and restoration for all eternity, and the throne of God and of the Lamb, and we shall see His face and walk with Him, and each other, once again in the cool of the eternal day. Truly, to understand the end we must comprehend the beginning and see the unfolding plan of God throughout all the ages—we are going back to Eden, and beyond!

Conclusion

Every major doctrine of the Bible has its origin in the first three chapters of Genesis. Those doctrines, like seeds ready to sprout and grow, hinge upon the precise words and phrases, the exact sentence structure and simple statements of fact contained in these pages. Without doubt there is beauty and poetry in the language. The passage is wondrous and pregnant with mystery giving rise to the imagination and longing to the soul of every child of God. How could they not be poetic in the way they grip the heart and awaken the yearning in all of us for Eden once again? This does not mean, however, that they are any less precise or any less accurate in everything they affirm. These words are the foundation for the rest of the Bible and truly form the bedrock of our faith.

The conviction of the Divine inspiration of the Bible begins here, at the beginning. Everything about one's convictions regarding the inerrant and infallible proclamation of God's special revelation to human beings is unveiled in how that person thinks about these eighty verses. If we doubt the historical accuracy of a single sentence, even a single phrase, we lose something important in the rest of the story. Our world view is flawed, we will not think accurately, and in some way, somewhere down the road, we will make a strategic error that may have profound consequences.

The entrance of Your Word, O God, brings the Light. If we doubt the beginning how can we believe the rest? If God cannot tell us plainly how the world started, how can He tell us of heavenly things? If He cannot make a universe in six days, how can He hold it all together merely by the Word of His power? How can He raise the dead? How can He resurrect me and bring my dead spirit to life again? What hope is there for recreation if there is no demonstration of mighty power in original creation?

The opening chapters of Genesis should be the place where we test one's convictions about the inspiration of Scripture and what inspiration means. It is here that we can test faith, examine the hermeneutic, explore the comprehension, and glimpse the heart that worships in awe and wonder a God of glory and majesty Who made all that is out of nothing and yet Who knew me by name before Adam was formed, who placed a value upon Me equal to the life, and the death, of His only Son.

It was Tozer who said words to the effect that the goal of all theology, ultimately, is to bring us to the place of wonder where we bow the knee before a Holy God Who is beyond our comprehension and simply worship.

From p. 8: Professor James Barr, former Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, quoted in *Six Days? Honestly!* (Published by Answers in Genesis), "Probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology of the world up to later stages in the biblical story (c) Noah's flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark. Or, to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the 'days' of creation to be long to eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any such professors, so far as I know."