

GENESIS 1 – 3 AND THE CROSS

The connection between the Gospel and the creation Scriptures?

The story of the Bible begins with God in eternal glory before the beginning of time and history, and it ends with God and his redeemed people in eternal glory. At the center stands the cross, where God revealed his glory through his Son. The history of salvation is the grand overarching story of the Bible; embracing it gives coherence to all of life. It calls each of God's people to own the story personally and it dignifies each believer with a role in the further outworking of the story.

The biblical story of redemption must be understood within the larger story of creation. First Adam, and later Israel, were placed in God's sanctuary... the Garden of Eden and the Promised Land, respectively. But both Adam and Israel failed to be a faithful, obedient steward, and both were expelled from the sanctuary God had created for them. But Jesus Christ—the second Adam, the son of Abraham, the son of David—was faithful and obedient to God. Though the world killed him, God raised him to life, which meant that death was defeated.

Through his Spirit, God pours into sinners the resurrection life of his Son, creating a new humanity “in Christ.” Those who are “in Christ” move through death into new life and exaltation in God's sanctuary, there to enjoy his presence forever.

Genesis and origins

The English title “Genesis” comes from the Greek translation of the Pentateuch and means “origin,” a very apt title because Genesis is all about origins—of the world, of the human race, of sin, death, and of the Jewish people. The book of Genesis opens with a majestic description of how God first created the heavens and earth and how he ordered the earth so that it may become his dwelling place.

The entire episode conveys the picture of the all-powerful, transcendent God who sets everything in place with consummate skill in conformity to his grand design. The emphasis is mainly on how God orders or structures everything... thus revealing his nature, character, and magnificent attributes—his holiness, glory, majesty, and sovereignty.

Let's turn to Chapter 1 of the historical narrative on creation as given to us by the only one who was there in the beginning.

Genesis Chapter 1 (NIV) *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.*

⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give

light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

Chapter 2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens--⁵ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground--⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.

¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. ²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Chapter 3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." ¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." ²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east

side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Believers are human, and we are susceptible to influences and pressures of the world, family, friends, coworkers, the media, and other Christians? The world constantly screams at Christians that the literal six-day creation is just a Bible fable and that our creation view does not fit with the facts. Secularists (and some compromising Christians) tell us that the fossil record took millions of years to form and it proves that our view of origins is wrong.

Genesis, as the first volume of this first section of the Bible, orients the reader to the rest of the Pentateuch, and thus to the rest of the Bible.

- 1) It explains in story form the nature and character of God and the place of man in God's creation.
- 2) The creation story also offers an analysis of sin and its consequences, and describes God's reaction to it... and thus shows why true religion must be redemptive.

It is clear that Adam and Eve are presented as real people. Their role in the creation story, as the channel by which sin and death came into the world, implies that they are seen as the headwaters of the human race.

“Made in the image and the likeness of God” distinguishes mankind from all the animals. Our nature is a special bestowal of God (i.e., not a purely “natural” development). For example:

- A **mind** so that we can know the one true God and **emotions** so that we can love God.
- A **free will** to make a reasoned and free choice to love God with all our heart and all our mind.

Frankly though, who likes to feel embarrassed, ashamed, out-of-date, and unscientific? Slowly many Christians (including pastors) unconsciously soothe these uncomfortable feelings by adopting views contrary to the literal biblical text. They end up accommodating the world's views by reading the secular beliefs and views into the Bible. Some clergy accept the idea that God used "goo-to-you" evolution; others compromise by believing that God created in spurts over millions of years.

But what does this do to the gospel? In any of these compromises, the need for the cross of Christ is severely undermined, because both of these views accept that physical death existed *before* Adam sinned. When a Christian's view of history places death before Adam's sin, they disregard the clear account in Genesis 1-3 that death was a *consequence* of Adam's sin. In the old earth (billions of years) compromise view held today by many Christians (including so many pastors), death and suffering existed before and preceded Adam's sin.

But this redefines all that the New Testament teaches on the cause of death. The Scripture makes it clear in Romans 5:12 and in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 that death-physical death-is the result of Adam's sin.

- Romans 5:12 says... *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...”*
- 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 tells us... *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*

The cross and Adam's sin

The Bible says the work of Christ on the Cross was to remedy the effects of Adam's sin. Jesus subjected himself to a torturous physical death, was placed in a physical tomb, and raised physically from the dead showing His complete power and victory over the effects of Adam's sin. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 express the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote, *“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”*

Please think this through very carefully: If death existed before Adam sinned, then the work of Christ on the Cross did not speak to the issue of physical death! The work of Christ is redefined, undermined, and robbed of its fullness and effect. If Adam's sin only brought spiritual death and not physical death, did Christ's Cross only remedy spiritual death? Most certainly not! If that were true, why would there even be a need for Christ's physical death and resurrection? And is not Christ's physical resurrection the very basis of our hope of a future physical resurrection?

Salvation is spiritual and physical

God brings spiritual salvation in the form of personal fellowship, spiritual intimacy, and the promise of eternal life with God. However, salvation also includes temporal, external deliverance—"salvation" in a physical sense... salvation is not merely spiritual. Christians look forward to the resurrection of the body and to "*new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwell*" (2 Peter 3:13). Personal salvation starts with renewal of the heart, but in the end it will be comprehensive... physical and spiritual, and cosmic in scope.

God's act of creation is the foundation for the entire biblical history and God's plan of salvation through Christ. The events recorded in the Bible are there because God wanted them recorded, and he had them recorded with his people and their instruction in mind... "*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*" Romans 15:4

If we say we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, then to be consistent, we dare not be ashamed of what the Bible tells us about the necessity of the Son of God giving His life for us. And it is connected to the book of Genesis. There was a real Adam who sinned... physical and spiritual death (separation from God) was the consequence.

Jesus came, praise Him, to remove this consequence. To accept and believe in a literal Adam is to chart a course to literally what Jesus did for us. Over the years, pastors and Bible teachers have not consistently taught that if there was not a real Adam, then why would there even be a need for a Savior?

When you identify this absolute link between the sin of Adam and the death of Christ on the Cross, you realize the subtleness of Satan's work, also. For if he openly attacked the Cross, Christians would be up in arms! But Satan came in the back door and attacked the credibility of the Genesis record, and through false science brought a view into the church that undermines the authority of Scripture. When Christian leaders question the accuracy of the text, a literal six-day creation, and a young earth (6,000 to 9,000 years), this indirectly undermines the Cross!

Now what?

As you read Genesis 1, ask the Lord to help you to put aside outside influences that may cause you to have a predetermined idea of what the word "day" may mean. Just let the passages speak to you that you may receive the fruit of God's holy Word. Taking Genesis 1 in this way, at face value, without doubt says that God created the universe, the earth, the sun, moon and stars, plants and animals, and the first two people within six ordinary (24 hour) days. Being really honest, you would have to admit that you could never get the idea of millions of years from reading the creation account.

Through his creative acts God reveals his nature, character, and attributes. In other words... we learn who he is through what he has done. The Bible says, "*This is eternal life, that you know the one true God...*" John 17:3. The creation story simply says that God brought the heavens and the earth into being by means of his spoken word ("*And God said*"). It explains that God ordered the earth in terms of time, space, and matter. It also reveals that people were originally created by God and appointed by him, as the Creator/Owner, to be his representatives on earth and to rule it for his glory and the benefit of all creation.

To the extent that scientists deny that God is the Creator of all things, a fundamental conflict will exist between the foundation and conclusions of such scientific work and the Bible. At the same time, to the extent that the focus of science is on understanding and describing the world that God created, no conflict between the Bible and scientific work needs to exist.

Understood in terms of what, God, the author of Genesis seeks to communicate; sciences as well as the Bible have a valuable and legitimate place. By divine revelation, Genesis provides knowledge that cannot be discovered by human investigation. If it were otherwise, there would be no need for Genesis to be a part of the Bible.

Genesis is the front end of the grand narrative storytelling of creation, sin, and redemption—a narrative that has reached a glorious point in the resurrection of Jesus... the down payment of its even more glorious consummation. The story is of a perfect world made by a sovereign God and man's role in that world. It is the story of how the stain of sin and Satan's works affects everything; and the story of how God intends to reverse those effects.

There is no reason a Christian should be ashamed of the Gospel and neither should they be ashamed of what the Bible tells us what really happened in the beginning. It is critical for true worship to NOT BE ASHAMED of anything God has told us in His Word!

Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

In conclusion, let's turn to the words that Paul wrote to the believers in Colosse... *"My purpose is that they (you) may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they (you) may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they (you) may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments."* (Colossians 2:1-4)