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Chapter 1

The Biblical Record of Creation

In Volume 2 of this Trilogy, *Science and Creation*, it is shown that the basic facts of science fit the creation model of origins and earth history much better than they do the evolution model. There are, to be sure, certain unresolved problems in correlating all the scientific data with the concept of recent special creation, but these problems are not nearly so intractable as those which evolutionism encounters.

However, the details of the creation period — such aspects as its duration, the order of events, the methods used, and especially its meaning and purpose — cannot be determined from science. The scientific method is limited to the study of processes as they occur at present, not as they *might* have occurred in the past. Science in its strict sense can deal with the “how” and “what” and “where” questions, but only rarely with “when,” and never with “why.”

If creation is really a fact, this means there is a Creator, and the universe is His creation. He had a purpose in creation, and man¹ is apparently at the center of that purpose, since only man is able to understand even the concept of creation. It is reasonable, therefore, that God, the Creator, would somehow reveal to His creature, man, the necessary information concerning the creation which could never be discovered by himself.

This is exactly what He *has* done in His book of “beginnings,” the Book of Genesis. Rather than outmoded folklore, as most critics allege, the creation chapters of Genesis are marvelous and accurate accounts of the

1 “Man” is used here and frequently in this book, as in the Bible, in the generic sense, as synonymous with “human beings.”

actual events of the primeval history of the universe. They give data and information far beyond those that science can determine, and at the same time provide an intellectually satisfying framework within which to interpret the facts that science *can* determine.

The old arguments against the historicity of Genesis no longer carry weight. It once was maintained that neither Moses nor any of his predecessors could have written Genesis, since they could not have known even how to write. No one dare suggest such a notion any more. Writing was practiced even by the common people long before Moses, and even before the time of Abraham. Early man was a highly skilled technologist in many fields at a time far earlier than imagined by evolutionists. There is no reason at all, other than evolutionary preconceptions, that it should not be believed that man has been able to read and write since he was first created.

The general setting of Genesis, from chapter 12 onward (culture, customs, etymology, geography, political units, etc.), is very realistic — so much so that its narratives must have come originally from contemporaries of the people described. There seems no good reason, except for evolutionary preconceptions, to reject the probable historicity of the preceding 11 chapters of Genesis, which merge easily and naturally into Genesis 12.

Finally, all the writers of the New Testament, and Jesus Christ himself, accepted the historical accuracy and divine inspiration of all the early chapters of Genesis, as will be shown in this chapter. To believe these records as being altogether true and reliable is the only position consistent with accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as true and His teachings as authoritative.

Divisions of Genesis

There are several helpful ways of subdividing the Genesis record for effective understanding. The most obvious division is that of the six days of creation. Another important distinction has to do with God's works of creation and His works of formation. Still another involves the structural divisions of the entire Book of Genesis itself. These divisions are indicated wherever the phrase "These are the generations of . . ." occurs. Each such occurrence marks the termination of one narrative and the beginning of another. This fact strongly implies that each of these divisions had a different original author.

1. The Original Writers of Genesis

As we have seen, the liberal myth that Moses could not have written Genesis because men did not know how to write then was dispelled a long

time ago. Nevertheless, certain differences in style and vocabulary still seem to many to justify some kind of “documentary” theory of Genesis, pointing to more than one author of the original documents.

It is significant that, although the Book of Genesis is frequently quoted in the New Testament, nowhere are any of these quotations attributed to Moses. Quotations from the other four books of the Pentateuch, however, frequently *are* ascribed to him. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the Jews regarded all five books as the books of Moses. This paradox is easily resolved when it is realized that Moses may have been the compiler and editor, rather than the author, of Genesis. The original writers of the various divisions were the patriarchs themselves, the ones whose names appear in the formula “These are the generations of. . . .”

In accord with the common practice of ancient times, records and narratives were written down on tables of stone and then handed down from family to family, perhaps, finally to be placed in a library or public storehouse of some sort. It seems most reasonable to believe that the original records of Genesis were written down by eyewitnesses and handed down through the line of patriarchs, from Adam through Noah and Abraham and finally to Moses.

All of these ancient records were then compiled and edited by Moses, with the necessary transitional and explanatory comments, into their final form. He later followed this with his own accounts, which we now have in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Realization of this fact makes these primeval histories *live* in an exciting way. They are not simply old traditions, handed down by word-of-mouth transmission for many generations, but are actual *firsthand accounts written by eyewitnesses* — men who knew and observed and reported things as they really happened.

The word “generations” in Hebrew became “Genesis” when translated into the Greek language for the Septuagint version. Genesis was adopted for the title of the entire book, a book of the collected “generations” of the ancient patriarchs. The word “genesis” conveys the idea both of origin and chronological records.

It was common in antiquity, when a chronicler completed a tablet, to affix his signature at its end. “These are,” he would write, “the historical records of Nahor” (or whatever his name was). Then, if some other writer later were to continue the same chronicle on another tablet, he would key it in to the previous one by some identifying word or

phrase which corresponded to the closing portion of the preceding tablet.²

Although there is some uncertainty about whether the “generations” formula applies to the verses preceding it or following it, the weight of evidence seems to favor the former. In every case, the events described in each section could have been known by the man whose name followed it, but not by the man whose name preceded it. For example, the so-called “second creation account,” from Genesis 2:3 to 5:1 is identified as “the book of the generations of Adam,” but Adam could not have known all the events described from 5:1 through 6:8. The latter was identified as “the generations of Noah” in Genesis 6:9.

Following this line of reasoning, there really are two creation accounts, the second written by Adam, from his viewpoint. The first (Gen. 1:1–2:3) could not have been observed by any man at all, and must have been written directly by God himself, either with His own “finger,” as He also did the Ten Commandments (Exod. 31:18), or else by direct supernatural revelation. This is the only one of the “generations” not identified with the name of a particular man, but instead, “These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created” (Gen. 2:4). In a very direct and unique way, this constitutes the Creator’s personal narrative of heaven and earth. It would be well not to try to explain away its historicity by calling it merely a literary device of some kind. Rather, men should bow before its author in believing obedience, acknowledging that He has clearly spoken, in words that are easy to be understood, concerning those things which they could never discover for themselves.

2. God’s Works of “Creating” and “Making”

The first creation account is concluded with the statement “He had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:3). There are evidently two types of “work” accomplished by God in the creation week and reported in His record. In some cases, His work was to create (Hebrew *bara*); in others, it was to *make* (Hebrew *asah*) or *form* (Hebrew *yatsar*). This statement provides another important direction for classifying God’s works as recorded in this chapter.

God’s work of creation, in other words, was that of calling into existence out of nothing (except God’s own power, of course) that which

2 P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1946). The “patriarchal documentary” theory of the writing of Genesis is developed fully and convincingly in this book. Also see the commentary on Genesis by Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 22–30.

had no existence in any form before. Only God can create in this sense, and in all the Bible no other subject appears for the verb “create” than God. It is possible for man with his God-created intelligence and abilities to “make” things, assembling complex systems out of simpler components, but he cannot “create” anything.³ God also can “make” things, and can do so far more effectively than man. He was, in fact, doing just this during the creation week, along with His work of creating, and both types of works — creating and making — were terminated at the end of that week. “The works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb. 4:3).

It is significant that only three works of real creation (that is, as specified by the verb *bara*) are recorded in Genesis 1. These are (1) the creation of the basic elements of the universe (space, matter, and time — or “heavens,” “earth,” and “beginning”) as recorded in Genesis 1:1; (2) the creation of consciousness (Hebrew *nephesh*, the “soul”), which is also associated with the “breath of life” (Hebrew *ruach*, the “spirit” or “mind” or “breath”) — recorded in Genesis 1:21, where “creature” is *nephesh*, which in the Hebrew is usually translated as “soul” or “life”; and (3) the creation of the “image of God” in man, as recorded in Genesis 1:27.

Thus, there are three basic created entities: the physical elements of the cosmos, of which all inorganic and unconscious organic systems⁴ (e.g., plants) are “made”; the animal world, whose physical systems consist of the same physical elements, but which also has the created capacity of consciousness; and the human realm, which shares the physical matter of the cosmos and the consciousness of the animal world, but which also has the uniquely created capacity for God-likeness — the “image of God.”

3. The Work of the Six Days

Between these great acts of *creation* were placed innumerable acts of *formation*, climaxed finally by the formation of man’s body out of the physical elements, the “dust of the ground,” and his soul and breath from God’s own Spirit (Gen. 2:7). These acts of formation were spaced

3 Sometimes a literary work, an artistic design, or even a new dress, is called a “creation,” but this is not really correct. A new combination of matter or ideas is a formation, or manufacture, not a true creation.

4 The exact boundary line between unconscious replicating chemical systems and creatures that have life in the biblical sense (that is, creatures possessing *nephesh*) is not yet clear from either science or Scripture. It may be possible that some of the simpler invertebrate animals are in the former category. In the case of plants, at least, the fact that they were designed by God to be used as food by men and animals means that they did not really possess life and, therefore, they could not “die.” Death came into the world only as a result of man’s sin (Rom. 5:12).