

# Genesis 1

## Part 1.1 – Approaching Genesis

### **Bereshit (בראשית)**

What are your thoughts, as you open the book of Genesis, and start reading? There are many different ways to read Genesis—though, I would argue that only one actually does justice to the text.

The truth is that the narrative in Genesis is far outside the experience of 21<sup>st</sup> Century human beings. In our case, we want to understand the text as best we can in a modern, or perhaps post-modern, context—but the text itself will not allow us to do so. Yet, many people do not want to read Genesis, as if it says what it says.

As I will show in these pages, Genesis clearly reports that God created everything in six literal 24-hour periods, followed by one literal 24-hour period of rest. Moreover, it can be calculated from the pages of the Bible that this creation week occurred just over 6,000 years ago. Both these biblical facts are considered contrary to prevailing worldviews, however. Therefore, rather than adjust their worldview to what the Bible says, it is common for many people to re-interpret Genesis, in the light of the prevailing worldview.

### **Evolutionary Worldview**

The prevailing worldview is something that we can call an evolutionary worldview. For convenience, we are going to call it the Evolutionary Worldview. Sometimes, to be even more brief, we will refer to it simply as Evolution.

There will be those who will point out that the word evolution means “change”. In the broader meaning of the word, I could indeed say that the creation ministry, which I lead, has evolved over time. This is true, but it is not the standard way of understanding the term today. There will be others who will argue that the term evolution specifically refers to biological processes. However, there are related supposed processes in astronomy (or rather cosmology) and in geology. These can also be placed under the heading of evolution, in the sense that they all attempt to describe how things have got to where they are today, without reference to the creative power of God.

In this book, therefore, our use of the term Evolutionary Worldview is to distinguish a God-free view of origins from a specifically biblical point of view. We will explain how this works out in practice during the course of the book.

## Biblical Worldview

The alternative to the above is to hold a specifically Biblical Worldview. This is a worldview in conformity with the words of Scripture. According to the principles of exegesis and hermeneutics, we will read Genesis as a work of historical narrative, and expect to understand it exactly as it is written.

We find the Bible to be the Word of God—authoritative, sufficient, complete, and inerrant. Therefore, we take the Bible at face value. The Bible states that God created not only the world but the entire universe, physical and spiritual, in just six days and rested on the seventh. I accept these days to be literal 24-hour periods of time. I accept few, if any, gaps in the genealogies, and certainly none in the so-called chrono-genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. The Bible gives us a timescale for the age of the Earth of a little over 6,000 years.

There are others who own the name of creationist who stretch out this timescale considerably. Some of their ideas will be tackled at the relevant points in this book. For other arguments, I will refer you to other books. Such ideas would include the so-called Old Earth Creationists, who would define each creation day as a long era of time. Some such people would refer to their Day Age Theory, or the idea of Progressive Creation. This latter accepts Cosmological Evolution (i.e. the Big Bang) and Geological Evolution, but maintains that God created different life forms progressively during this long timescale<sup>1</sup>. Still others (the Gap Theory) have suggested a long era of time to be inserted into the early part of Genesis. Most such Gap Theorists have their gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, though others have put it between 1:2 and 1:3, while still others have the gap prior to Genesis 1:1<sup>2</sup>.

A much more complicated way of re-interpreting Genesis has arisen among those who would refer to themselves as conservative evangelicals. This group, represented by such theologians as Tim Keller, NT Wright, or Peter Enns, maintain that they believe Genesis to be completely true, but that it doesn't mean what we think it means. They maintain that Genesis is an example of Ancient Near East (ANE) mythology; a polemic against paganism. NT Wright goes so far as to suggest that those of us who accept the six literal 24-hour days are "not reading the text properly". There are a number of names given to the way that these theologians interpret Genesis. Some refer to it as BioLogos, some as theistic evolution, and some as the Framework Hypothesis. There are slight differences between each of these positions, but they are all basically attempting to weld a conservative view of Genesis with an acceptance of evolution<sup>3</sup>.

There are others who define themselves as Young Earth Creationists. Such people would suggest that there is scientific evidence, correctly interpreted, that gives an age for the Earth in thousands, rather than billions. Many of these people require an age for the Earth of 10,000 years or less, though there

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1 . For a refutation of Progressive Creation, see Sarfati, J. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2011), *Refuting Compromise*, (Powder Springs, GA: Creation Book Publishers)

2 . For a refutation of the Gap Theory, see Fields, W. (2005), *Unformed and Unfilled*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books)

3 . For a refutation of these positions, see Gentry, K.L. (2016), *As It Is Written*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books)

are other Young Earth Creationists, whose model stretches out the age to 30,000 years. I have even heard one such creationist accepting an age of a million years for the Earth.

The previous paragraph underlines a problem within today's creationist community. These ages for the Earth, adopted by Young Earth Creationists, are derived from interpretation of scientific evidence. But, as I shall show, analysis of the biblical text gives an age for the Earth of just over 6,000 years, and certainly less than 7,000 years. So the ages used by many Young Earth Creationists are not biblically derived, though they maintain that they are consistent with a biblical timescale. It is their source of derivation which is at fault, aptly illustrated by their name. If they believe in a Young Earth, what do they mean? "Young" compared to what? The Earth is, in fact, very, very old, according to the Bible. It is ancient. It is over 6,000 years old, which is very old. 6,000 years can only be considered "young", if compared to the deep-time mythology of the evolutionists. We should not define ourselves, by comparison to an evolutionary view. As Christians, we should be starting with two fundamental presuppositions: that God exists, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, our dating is derived from the Bible, and the scientific evidence is shown to be consistent with that, rather than deriving an age from science, and requiring the Bible to be consistent with the age given. For this reason, I am not wont to call myself a Young Earth Creationist. I prefer the term Biblical Creationist.

This commentary will take a Presuppositional approach to Genesis, and will derive its information first and foremost from Scripture itself. This does not mean that science will be ignored. Far from it, but we shall see that the science is led by the biblical exposition, and not the other way around.