

The Early Chapters of Genesis - Introduction

PART 1 - God's Active Involvement in History: A Guarantee of His Future Involvement

2 Peter 3:3-7

³ First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

What Does the Scripture Say?

What will happen in the "last days" (v.3)? _____

These people are characterized by two things:

- They will mock and scoff. (We will learn more about this in v. 4.)
- They will do as they please.

The word "evil" was added by the translators, as being implied. *Any* desire that is put ahead of "love for God and neighbor" - Matthew 22:37-40 - is evil. (Also: Some translations use the word "lust," but in the N.T. Greek, "lust" and "desire" are the *same* word. The context shows us whether the desire is good or evil.)

They do not want their conduct to be restrained by God's moral laws. They reject (and mock) God's revelation of truth (his Word), and set up their own "guidelines" for life.

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;
but blessed is he who keeps the law. (Proverbs 29:18)

- For a further description of what these people do, see Jude 1:18 (and the context, v. 14-19).
- 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describes what people will be like during the "last days." (Read it. Does it sound anything like today?)

Their Mockery of What God Says

What is one of the things they will mock (v. 4a)? _____

What will they claim is the basis for their mocking (v. 4b)? _____

"Things go on as they always have."

This is their "foundational principle." It is a denial that God has an *active* role in the history of the world. *They deliberately ignore the FACT that what they are saying is not true!*

Two specific facts that they *deliberately* ignore (v. 5-6):

- Verse 5 (a reference to the things mentioned in Genesis 1): _____

- Verse 6 (a reference to the things mentioned in Genesis 6-8): _____

Both of these *facts* testify to the fact that God has the power to keep his promise regarding his future coming. If God could *create* the world by simply uttering a *word* (v. 5), and if he could *destroy* the world by sending a global flood, then nothing can stop him from coming back again, when he is ready to do so (v. 7)!

More about his future coming:

- Why hasn't he come back yet (v. 8-9)?
Time is not an issue. Also, he's giving more people an opportunity to be saved.
- What will happen when he does come (v. 10, 12b-13)?
A judgment of fire will occur; a new heaven and earth will be formed. (Other Scripture passages tell us about other events that will also occur at this time.)
- How should we respond to this fact (v. 11-12a, 14+)?
Live in a way that is holy, godly and blameless; waiting with anticipation (for his return); etc. We must certainly *not* live the unrestrained way these mockers are living! (Read chapter 2 for a further description of them.)

How Do They Explain-Away What God Did in the Past?

If they're going to *deliberately* ignore these two facts (the creation and the global flood), how are they going to explain them away?

In the past, most people (even *non*-Christians) accepted the fact of creation. They might not have always gotten all the details correct, but they couldn't get around the fact that it must have happened. However, most realized that the *fact* of creation implied that we have a moral accountability to the one who created us. This implied a future judgment - and people who wanted to do as they please didn't like this idea.

One way to get around this (quite popular at times in the past) was to admit that God created the world, but then claim that he later chose to leave creation alone, to take care of itself. (They still denied a future accountability.)

A more recent way to try to get around this future judgment is to simply deny what God has done in the past. In recent centuries, one of the popular methods has been to claim that there never was a creation or flood, but that things have always gone on as they do now. Instead of God's instant act of creation (caused by the mere utterance of his word - v. 5), they claim that nature "created" itself, through imperceptibly slow changes, over millions and billions of years! They simply deny God's active involvement in history (at numerous times in the past, not just at creation), and invent myths and stories as a substitute for the truth.

One of the ways they bolster support for their invented stories is to claim that their views are "scientific." Actually, the issue is not that *science* supports their views; rather, their *philosophical speculations* about the past are used to *redefine* the facts which can be observed at the present. (What they can't redefine, they ignore.) It's not an issue of "facts," but of assumptions and speculations that are used to *change* the significance of the facts. More than that, since it supposedly took millions of years for these things to occur, they would claim that you *can't* observe them happening. You simply have to accept *by faith* that it happened!

Remember this: The people who invent these stories (see 2 Peter 2:3) may act as though they are "seekers of truth," but they are *not* neutral and unbiased. They have an agenda to remove God from the story. They want to "do as they please" (v. 4), without any accountability to God. Many people will be deceived by their myths - people who will blindly follow, and then zealously promote the stories they have been told to believe. What they say will sound very attractive to those who reject the Word of God (compare to 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Their talk will also appeal to those who delight in the thought of unrestrained living - which they may even redefine as "freedom" (compare to 2 Peter 2:18-19). *However, none of this can do away with the FACTS they deliberately ignore.*

Is There Any "Middle Ground"?

There have been many attempts to find a "middle ground" between what Genesis says and what these false teachers say. These false teachers are often quite vocal about their views, and use "scientific-sounding" words that make them sound authoritative. Many people blindly swallow what these false teachers dish-out, because they don't know how to examine the evidence for themselves. Some, attempting to "rescue" the Genesis account, try to merge the two viewpoints together into one.

God claims to have created everything in six days. This has always been the normal way to accept the description found in Genesis 1, when the text was allowed to "speak for itself." Prior to the invention of these modern "stories," people didn't see anything in the text of Scripture to indicate anything else. This is because there *isn't* anything else there!

However, when people *wanted* to see something else there (such as millions of years), they began to *read into* the text things that aren't there. This is how they came up with "compromise views" between truth and error.

Here are some of the views that have been invented over the past two centuries:

- One view claims that a "gap" occurs between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. People who hold to this view claim that "evolution" occurred between these two verses, and that the events described in the rest of Genesis 1 occurred after that. One variation of this view claims that everything "evolved," that it was destroyed (perhaps by a catastrophe), and that God then "re-created" things, in the way described in Genesis 1.
- Another view claims that each "day" in Genesis 1 represents millions of years. In some ways, this view is almost like an act of desperation, because the descriptions of the seven days simply *don't* correlate with the "theories" that the mockers invented.
- Of course, there will be others who claim that the entire creation account is a "myth" and that it wasn't intended to be taken seriously - even though nothing in Scripture would suggest that!

The Present-Day Conflict between Facts and Mockery

Today, as always in the past, there are many scientists who accept the Bible's account of creation. Even many *non-Christian* scientists are convinced that the universe is so complex, that "something" had to bring it into existence. (Many people who hold to the "intelligent design" theory fall into this category.)

However, the myth that nature "created itself" over billions of years has become the predominant view. Its proponents are the most vocal - *and the most vicious in attempting to suppress* (and distort the public perception of) *the views of others*. Because their view is so compatible with the spirit of the "last days," it may remain the predominant force, *the facts notwithstanding*. Perhaps this mockery is one of the things that must first happen, before God returns (contrary to their mockery) and brings the "last days" to a close!

PART 2 - About the Differences between Genesis 1 and 2

The book of Genesis is a compilation of eleven different eyewitness accounts of various events that happened in history, all combined into one book (actually, a "scroll"), by Moses. Because chapters 1 and 2 (beginning with verse 4) are different accounts, we can *expect* differences in what they say and how they say it. The one difference we will *not* see is a difference caused by *contradictions*.

- Note that chapter and verse divisions are *not* inspired. People added them thousands of years later, in an attempt to make it easier to locate specific passages. Sometimes they did a poor job at choosing where to put the divisions. This is why the first account ends at 2:3, rather than at the end of chapter 1.

Below are two significant differences between Genesis 1 and 2:

The Difference of Who the Eyewitness Was

Genesis 1 (and the first 3 verses of chapter 2) is an eyewitness account given by *God*, not by people. Humans weren't present to witness it (except for a few hours on Day 6 and all of Day 7)! God was the only one mentioned in the account, who could know what he did!

- Plants and animals couldn't tell us. They lack the ability for conscious reflection, since they don't bear the image of God.
- There is no record of when heavenly creatures were created. They are not mentioned here, and there is no evidence that they had anything to do with what occurred in this chapter.

Genesis 2 (starting with verse 4) is the first part of ten historical accounts that were witnessed by *humans*.

These accounts were first transmitted verbally, and then (after writing was developed) written down.

- In the early centuries of human existence, there was a large overlap between generations (due to the great longevity of humans at that time - see Genesis 5). This would have guaranteed the accuracy of verbally-transmitted historical records. Unlike today, there would never be an instance in which the wealth of past information would be at the mercy of one or two people who were becoming forgetful in their old age.
- Most of Genesis 2 would have been personally witnessed by Adam, and he could have communicated it to his offspring. The account focuses mostly on where Adam lived, what he was supposed to do, and how his wife came into existence. It doesn't really say much about what happened on the first 5½ days of the earth's existence, because Adam wasn't there to see it! (There is just a short summary statement that certain things *didn't* exist, until God made them. Either Adam or Moses could have added these initial comments to the account, based on information God had given about the event.)
- This specific account continues to the end of chapter 4. The other nine accounts are about: Adam's line (5:1-6:8); Noah (6:9-9:29); Shem, Ham and Japheth (10:1-11:9); Shem (11:10-26); Terah (11:27-25:11); Abraham's son Ishmael (25:12-18); Abraham's son Isaac (25:19-35:29); Esau (36:1-37:1); and Jacob (37:2-50:26).
- The final wording of these accounts, as we have them today, would have been determined by Moses (guided by God), as he wrote down the five books of the Law (Genesis through most of Deuteronomy). Also, he did not necessarily have to include *everything* mentioned in the original accounts - only what was needed.

The Difference of How the word "Day" Is Used

Genesis 1 uses the word "day" in a distinctly *literal, chronological* manner. God *defines* the word in terms of events that occur every 24 hours: evening and morning.

- There is absolutely nothing in the context (or in any other Scripture passage that directly refers to this chapter) to suggest that the word is merely symbolic. (That idea was invented later, after people had *already* chosen to *not* accept what was written *the way it was written*.)

Genesis 2 (beginning with v. 4) uses the word "day" in a distinctly *symbolical* manner.

- There is nothing in the context to suggest that the word is being used in reference to a 24-hour time period. Rather, it is used in the sense of "when." The phrase, "*in the day that God created...*" means about the same as, "*when God created.*"