

GENESIS AND THE HISTORICAL ADAM

(SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2021)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1-3

INTRODUCTION

1] Introduction to the Subject

Debate about the historical Adam has been going on between those who believe the Bible stands above whatever science supposedly states and those who want to try to merge or synthesize the Bible and contemporary scientific thought.

I believe the main issue always goes back to **By What Standard?** Who in the end gets to be the umpire, the referee who makes the decisive call?

Importantly we must distinguish again **Operational vs. Historical Science.** They are very different aspects of thought.

Also, anyone who thinks you can conduct scientific research in most areas of academia

freely have entirely drunk the Kool Aid. The only allowable paradigm in probably 99% of universities is the evolutionary model.

My interest in this subject is related to the recent conference on creation and an article written recently by the philosopher William Lane Craig on whether Adam really existed as an historical person and where did this Adam come from?

2] William Lane Craig's Argument on Adam and Eve

William Lane Craig, 72, has been a very popular philosopher and debater in evangelical circles.

He taught philosophy at TEDS from 1980-1986. He has had connections with such schools as Biola, Talbot School of Theology, and Houston Baptist University.

He is the author or editor for over 40 books and 200 articles published in various journals. He

recently wrote an article that appeared in the Catholic Magazine, *First Things*, in their October 2021 edition.

In this article he attempts to **synthesize the Bible and evolutionary beliefs on human origins.**

Here is his opening argument:

What historical claims does the Bible make about Adam and Eve? And is belief in a historical Adam and Eve compatible with the scientific evidence? In order to avoid the pitfalls of reading contemporary science into the biblical texts, it is best to treat these questions separately. Only after having determined what the Bible actually says about the historical Adam shall we be in a position to judge whether those claims are compatible with what we know of human origins from contemporary science.

Let me give an overview of several of his arguments:

In terms of genre, Genesis 1-11 has key characteristics of myth.

Craig states that there is an apparent interest also in history. There are chronologies.

"If the first eleven chapters of Genesis are in one sense myth, they are in another sense history."

"Fantastic lifespans indicates we are not dealing with straightforward history."

Who is to say on this? The fact that there is a gradual depression of life spans as we move from the time of the flood to the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shows these are real ages.

Interestingly, Craig points out that Babylonian myths have 432,000 years of kings reigning prior to the flood.

The Bible has just 1,656 years from Adam until the Flood.

Doesn't this show a clear difference between the historical truth of Scripture and the fables of man?

Craig argues for the term "**mytho-history**," not to be taken literally.

Craig shows how ridiculous some of the ANE accounts are. The Bible's account is vastly different.

[We do not need to read Gen. 1-11 literally.](#)

This is a dangerous slide. Why does it end in Genesis 12 and following? Who says we go from

mytho-history into real history with Genesis 12?
What is the change in style?

Craig discounts an orthodox reading of Genesis 2:

The idea of an arboretum containing trees bearing fruit that, if eaten, would confer immortality or yield sudden knowledge of good and evil must have seemed fantastic to the author.

Regarding Genesis 3, Craig says the snake is just a symbol of evil.

The snake's personality and speech cannot be attributed to the miraculous activity of God, lest God become the author of the Fall.

No mention of the devil in this discussion.

The cherubim also are not literal.

"It is not as though the author thought, what realism requires, that the cherubim remained at the entrance of the Garden for

years on end until it was either overgrown with weeds or swept away by the Flood."

Craig does state 10 principles that I can agree with overall in terms of what we learn from Genesis 1-3.

These truths do not depend upon reading the *primaeval* narratives literalistically.

I would say that they come from taking the narrative as it stands. Craig is borrowing from our understanding of this passage to try to justify his synthesis.

Then we move into the NT.

Literary Adam vs. Historical Adam

"Historical Adam is the person, if such there be, who actually existed - the actual individual whom the stories are allegedly about."

We want to know how close the historical Adam is to the literary Adam.

Do the NT passages referring to Adam assert truths or merely truths-in-the-stories-of-Genesis?

I find this getting tedious. This is also very dangerous. We start dividing truth from reality when we go down this path.

To support his argument, Craig shows there are examples of NT writers citing pseudigraphal and mythological texts.

Jude 9-10

Origen says that this story is found in the apocryphal book *The Assumption of Moses*.

This is a reference to the literary Moses of the Testament of Moses or The Assumption

of Moses, not to the literary Moses of the Pentateuch.

Jude also quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9, a pseudepigraphal book from 400-200 B.C. Jude quotes him as though the author were identical to the Enoch of the antediluvian primaeval history.

This text is the *reductio ad absurdum* of facile arguments for OT historicity on the basis of NT citation.

Craig also brings up as an example 1 Corinthians 10:4

1Cor. 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Leon Morris writes about this.

Moses got water from a rock at the beginning and end of the wilderness

wanderings (Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13), and this apparently was the origin of a Jewish legend that a rock travelled with the people. **Paul may have had this legend at the back of his mind, but he does not refer to it.** He refers to Christ and sees him as following the Israelites and continually giving them drink.¹

Craig states that this legend is seen as early as the first-century in pseudo-Philo 10:7 and 11:15.

These examples, Craig says, show how naïve it is to argue that merely because some NT author refers to a literary figure, that figure must be a historical person.

Does anyone make this claim?

¹ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 140.

Can a minister cite a Disney message and a Bible passage and then we conclude the pastor thinks both are historical?

When Jesus referred to Adam, Craig says that Jesus is **just talking about literary Adam.**

Is Jesus distinguishing literary Adam and historical Adam? Really?

Craig says that Paul's statement in Romans 5:12-21 is different. **Only a historical action can have real-world effects.**

It follows that Adam and his sin are asserted by Paul to be historical. What Paul asserts of the historical Adam does not, however, go beyond what we have already affirmed on the basis of our genre analysis of the primaeval history of Gen. 1-11.

When did this Adam live? Here we must turn to modern science, Craig says.

3] Focus on the creation account and the account of the fall

The account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 is a spectacular account in that we are given the privilege of understanding how the expansive, incredible universe and world in which we live were given a start.

Does this account give us all that we would like to know? No, we would love to know more, but our central job is always to focus on what has been given rather than what other details we would like to know.

What Genesis 1 shows is that matter is not eternal nor self-creating and organizing.

Simply by the power of God's Word everything came into being and then was ordered by God.

Psa. 33:6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,

And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

What we observe about God's magnificent creation is indeed confirmed by what true science has revealed and what other passages show.

God has created a massive universe. Humanity is so insignificant in terms of what God has made, and yet everything that we have observed in studying the universe shows that life is found only earth.

There is beauty when we look at the massive size of Jupiter or the rings of Saturn. But only on earth do we find life.

We also observe that Genesis 1 does give us a **timing** for God's work of creation.

Evening and morning were the first day.

Evening and morning were the second day.

So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

There is no way to get around the clear intent that Genesis 1 speaks of six days of creation.

Genesis 2:1-3 speaks of God's rest on the seventh day.

Nothing in the rest of Scripture would indicate any other different view of the timing and work of creation.

It is indeed spectacular. But this is the clear message of Scripture.

What other starting point should we seek to use?

It has been almost three years since we were in Genesis 1.

I presented the following as we looked at the sixth day of creation.

Consider the evolutionary time perspective.

Big Bang - 14 billion years ago

Earth coming into being - 4.54 b.y.a.

Man, *Homo sapiens* - 200,000 y.a.

Compress 14 billion years into one day. Man has been around for about 1 second.

According to this view, for over 99.99% of the earth's history according to evolution, man has had no place.

Why would you try to reconcile such a ridiculous worldview with God's truth or think it is anyway compatible?

There is absolutely nothing in Genesis 1 or 2 that would ever justify trying to reconcile this idea.

A very important passage that our guest two weeks ago mentioned and others have as well in terms of the debate about earth's history is found in Mark 10:6 and other parallel passages.

What did Jesus say about the creation of man in relationship to the beginning?

Mark 10:6 But from the beginning of the creation, God "*made them male and female.*"

Let's move to Genesis 2.

The word man used in verse 7 is the Hebrew word *adam*, which later becomes the name for Adam.

The word ground is the word *adamah*. So, you can see there is a play on words.

What we clearly see in verse 7 is that man was not made through evolution from some other creature.

Man is formed, dust from the ground, but man is not just a collection of materials found in the earth.

The LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

One commentator notes:

breathed is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was an act of giving as well as making... Even at our making, then,

the pattern 'God so loved ... that he gave ...' is already visible.²

The expression “the breath of life” is important in understanding how we are different from the animals.

With the animals we are living beings.

Distinct from the animals we are made in God's image and likeness and that we have received the breath of God. This is the only place in Scripture where this exact phrase is used.

What a beautiful testimony then we have to God's power that I believe is also a powerful argument to use in the face of unbelief.

Evolutionists have zero explanation for the origin of life, human consciousness, and the incredible intelligence given to men and women.

² Tyndale Commentary, 65.

Verse 7 also has a very important connection with the message of the gospel as Paul shows in 1 Cor. 15.

1Cor. 15:45 And so it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being.*" The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

Contrast the account of Scripture with what Craig's completely imaginative idea of how Adam and Eve were created.

We may imagine an initial population of hominins – animals that were like human beings in many respects but lacked the capacity for rational thought. Out of this population, God selected two and furnished them with intellects by renovating their brains and endowing them with rational souls. One can envision a regulatory genetic mutation, which effected a change in the functioning of the brain, resulting in significantly greater cognitive capacity. Such a transformation could equip the

individuals with the neurological structure to support a rational soul. Thus the radical transition effected in the founding pair that lifted them to the human level plausibly involved both biological and spiritual renovation. Some behavioral outworkings of this transformation would be immediate, whereas others would emerge slowly through environmental niche construction and gene-cultural coevolution.

Does this account do any justice to Scripture?

Would any evolutionist somehow find this attractive?

Getting back to Genesis 2, we see that after Adam's creation, God created a beautiful place for Adam to live.

The LORD God made a part of His good creation even more beautiful. This was to be man's duty following God's example.

Verse 9 shows that the garden God planted was probably the most beautiful place on earth based on the description here and in the following verses.

Verse 9 highlights that what God created was beautiful – pleasant to the sight – and that the fruit of the trees was delicious.

What do you notice about the description in verse 9?

It is part of the same description found in Genesis 3 as Eve considered eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We observe from verse 9 that God placed two trees in the midst or the middle of the garden – the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

I mentioned earlier, Craig's comments on these two trees:

The idea of an arboretum containing trees bearing fruit that, if eaten, would confer immortality or yield sudden knowledge of good and evil must have seemed fantastic to the author.

What should we think about these two trees?

Craig, I believe makes the mistake that we have to think of these trees simply in terms of biology.

How can fruit give eternal life or knowledge of good and evil?

Throughout Scripture we see that God uses physical objects in spiritual ways.

Since God is the creator, He is not bound by creation as we are.

We are talking about what we sometimes call the miraculous – **the intersection of the physical and God’s infinite power.**

Can you think of examples where God used something physical to work in a spiritual and physical way?

1] Bronze serpent

2] Jesus's miracles where he used touch, mud, and simply His Word to do something entirely amazing.

3] Acts 19:11-12

Acts 19:11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

In my opinion, these trees had no power in themselves in terms of their simply physical properties.

God set them apart to signify life and man's total dependence upon the LORD.

Obedience to God and what He commands is the key.

When Moses struck the rock instead of just speaking to the rock, he suffered a great judgment.

This is not that difficult.

Let's turn next to Genesis 3.

Craig says the snake is just a symbol of evil.

The snake's personality and speech cannot be attributed to the miraculous activity of God, lest God become the author of the Fall.

Let's focus on what God's Word teaches us here.

Genesis 2:25 tell us that Adam and Eve were both **naked** in perfect innocence and purity.

The word **naked** in Hebrew as used in verse 25 has the *same sound* as the word **crafty**, used in 3:1 to describe the serpent.

The words are not identical – they sound similar.

Now the word **crafty** doesn't always have a negative meaning in Scripture, especially as it is used in the book of Proverbs, but here we can clearly see that the serpent's crafty nature was perverted through Satan's use of it.

A speaking serpent should cause you to pause and consider what is going on.

In Genesis 3 there is nothing directly that explains that the serpent was being controlled or used by Satan.

How do we know that the serpent was being directed or controlled by Satan?

Verse 15 shows that we are not just dealing with snakes and reptiles.³

Other passages also make this connection between Satan and the serpent more clear.

For example, Jesus in John 8:44 states the following:

John 8:44 You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

We also consider two passages from Revelation.

Rev. 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and

³ "the inference becomes compelling in 15..."

Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 72.

Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev. 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Also consider Paul's warning in 2 Cor. 11.

2Cor. 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.⁴

In understanding the serpent speaking we can also consider the example of Balaam's donkey and in the gospels the power of demons to seize control of another creature's mind and speak through it.

⁴ These references all suggested by John MacArthur.

We are not told what Eve thought of a speaking serpent, so this doesn't need to be our focus or worry.

Doing some research on this subject, I came across the comments of Adam Clarke.

Clarke lived from 1762-1832 and was a British Methodist. He wrote a commentary on the entire Bible, a project that took him 40 years to complete.

Reading his commentary you see he was a scholar, someone who knew language, etc.

I do find his idea that the serpent of Gen. 3 was not a snake but a creature in the ape family quite strange.

“It therefore appears to me that a creature of the ape or ouran outang kind is here intended; and that Satan made use of this creature as the most proper instrument for

the accomplishment of his murderous purposes against the life and soul of man.”⁵

Listen to John Calvin’s comments on the serpent and Satan.

For when Moses says that the serpent was crafty beyond all other animals, he seems to intimate, that it had been induced to deceive man, not by the instigation of Satan, but by its own malignity. I answer, that the innate subtlety of the serpent did not prevent Satan from making use of the animal for the purpose of effecting the destruction of man. For since he required an instrument, he chose from among animals that which he saw would be most suitable for him: finally, he carefully contrived the method by which the snares he was preparing might the more easily take the mind of Eve by surprise. Hitherto, he had held no communication

⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 469.

with men; he, therefore, clothed himself with the person of an animal, under which he might open for himself the way of access. Yet it is not agreed among interpreters in what sense the serpent is said to be ערום (*aroom, subtle,*) by which word the Hebrews designate the *prudent* as well as the *crafty*. Some, therefore, would take it in a good, others in a bad sense. I think, however, Moses does not so much point out a fault as attribute praise to nature because God had endued this beast with such singular skill, as rendered it acute and quick-sighted beyond all others. But Satan perverted to his own deceitful purposes the gift which had been divinely imparted to the serpent.

Finally here are the comments of MacArthur:

The serpent, a manifestation of Satan, appears for the first time before the Fall of man. The rebellion of Satan, therefore, had occurred sometime after 1:31 (when everything in creation was good), but before 3:1. Cf. Eze 28:11-15 for a possible

description of Satan's dazzling beauty and Isa 14:13, 14 for Satan's motivation to challenge God's authority (cf. 1Jn 3:8). Satan, being a fallen archangel and, thus, a supernatural spirit, had possessed the body of a snake in its pre-Fall form.⁶

We can rest assured that this is not some mythical story but a faithful account of the fall of Adam and Eve.

The next time that we study this subject, I want to look at NT Writers who sometimes cite non-inspired books in their writing.

What does this say about the historicity of Genesis?

⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), paragraph 1475.

Any final thoughts or questions?