

CFBC Hermeneutics- Literary Genre

Notes derived from Michael Vlach...

A. *What is Literary Genre?* "Literary genre" refers to the category or the kind of writing characterized by a particular form(s) and/or content" (Zuck, p. 126).

B. *Why is Genre important?* Distinguishing the various genres (kinds of literature) in Scripture helps us to interpret the Bible more accurately. "It helps give a sense of the overall thrust of the Bible book, so that verses and paragraphs can be seen in light of the whole. This helps prevent the problem of taking verses out of context" (Zuck, p. 126).

C. *Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics:* "We affirm that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms" (Article X). "We affirm that awareness of literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of Biblical study" (Article XIII).

Biblical Genres...

A. *Epistles (exposition)* The epistle is the dominant literary genre of the New Testament in terms of space. It is a mixed form that combines literary and expository features. The usual New Testament epistle consists of five main parts: 1) an opening or salutation; 2) thanksgiving (prayer for spiritual welfare and/or remembrance of recipients); 3) body of letter; 4) moral exhortations; and 5) closing with final greetings and benediction (Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, p. 155).

1. Ex. Romans "The book of Romans is a tightly reasoned explanation of the gospel. Paul argues like a lawyer presenting a case before a court" (Hendricks, *Living By the Book*, p. 210).
2. Paul's other letters, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, the epistles of John, and Jude.

3. Advantage of epistolary or expository literature "Their meaning lies close to the surface. . . . And their purposes are easy to grasp; they practically outline themselves. Yet they also make for exciting in-depth analysis because their truths are inexhaustible" (Hendricks, p. 210).
4. Key to understanding "The key to understanding a work of exposition is to pay attention to its structure and the terms it employs" (Hendricks, p. 211).

B. Narrative "A narrative is of course a story, but a biblical narrative is a story told for the purpose of conveying a message through people and their problems and situations. Biblical narratives are selective and illustrative. The biblical narratives are not intended to be full biographies giving every detail of individuals' lives; the writers carefully selected the material they included (obviously doing so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to accomplish certain purposes" (Zuck, p. 128).

1. Examples- Much of Genesis, Ezra, Acts
2. Most predominant literary category "The Bible contains more of the type of literature called 'narrative' than it does of any other literary type. For example, over 40 percent of the Old Testament is narrative. Since the Old Testament itself constitutes three-quarters of the bulk of the Bible, it is not surprising that the single most common type of literature in the entire Bible is narrative" (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, p. 78).
3. Purpose of narratives The purpose of biblical narratives is to show God at work in His creation and among His people. Narratives help us understand and appreciate God for who He is and what He does. Narratives also reveal much about human beings in their relations to God.
4. Keys to understanding narratives
 - a. **Find the plot and movement of the story.** "This could be physical, as in the case of the Israelites moving across the Sinai peninsula in Exodus; it could be spiritual, as in the case of Samson in Judges. . . it could be relational, as in Ruth, or political, as in 1 and 2 Kings. The question is, what

development is there in the story? What is different at the end of the book, and why?" (Hendricks, p. 211).

b. Study the characters. Who are the characters in the narrative? What roles do they play? How are they presented? How do the characters relate to each other? What progress or regress do they make? Do they fail or succeed? Why?

5. Principles for interpreting narrative parts of the Bible (adapted from Fee and Stuart, pp. 83-84).

- **Experiences found in narratives are not to be taken in a normative way unless other Scripture explicitly says so.** "Our assumption, shared by many others, is that *unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative way—unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author intended it to function in this way*" (Fee and Stuart, p. 106).
- **Narratives usually do not directly teach doctrine.**
- **Narratives usually illustrate a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.**
- **Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time.** Not every narrative has an identifiable moral of the story.
- **What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us.** The fact that God allowed polygamy in the cases of Abraham, David and Solomon does not mean that such action is acceptable before God. Godly men, at times, did wrong and sinful things.
- **All narratives are selective and incomplete.** The only details that are recorded are those that the Spirit of God inspired the human author to write (cf. John 21:25).

- **Narratives are not written to answer all of our theological questions.** They have particular, limited purposes, leaving other issues to be dealt with elsewhere.
- **Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).**

C. *Gospels* The gospels include a good deal of narrative material but it is a mistake to approach the gospels as simply biographical information about the life of Jesus Christ. As Zuck says, "The Gospels include a good bit of biographical material on Christ, but they are more than biographies. They are both doctrine and narrative, presented to set forth information on the person of Jesus Christ" (Zuck, p. 132). Special emphasis is placed the last few years of Jesus' life and His sacrificial death.

D. *Legal* Legal literature involves material that is mostly made up of commandments. Legal literature in the Bible includes Exodus 20-40, the Book of Leviticus, portions of Numbers (chs. 5-6, 15, 18-19, 28-30, 34-35) and almost all of Deuteronomy.

E. *Parables* "A parable is a brief tale that illustrates a moral principle" (Hendricks, p. 212). It presents scenes and activities common to everyday life.

Examples- Matt. 13, Mark 4, Luke 15-16

F. *Poetry* "The Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are the five major poetical books of the Old Testament. . . . A distinct feature of the poetry of the Bible is that two (and sometimes three or four) lines are stated in parallel form" (Zuck, p. 130). The distinctive feature of poetry is its appeal to the emotions, as well as the imagination" (Hendricks, p. 212).

Examples- Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

- **Sung not read** Realize that much of poetry, including most of the Psalms, were meant to be sung, not read.

- **Hyperbole** Recognize "hyperbole," extreme or exaggerated language. For example, "Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6:6).

G. Wisdom "In this genre, the writer assumes the role of a wizened veteran of life prepared to share his insights with a younger, inexperienced, but teachable reader" (Hendricks, p. 214).

1. Examples "The Wisdom books are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. (Some also include the Song of Songs in this group.) All wisdom literature is poetry, but not all poetic material is Wisdom literature" (Zuck, p. 131).
2. Two kinds of wisdom literature
 - **Proverbial literature** Proverbial literature is best seen in the book of Proverbs. "The proverbs or maxims are general truths based on broad experience and observation. These are guidelines which are normally true in general. They are guidelines, not guarantees; precepts, not promises" (Zuck, p. 132).
 - (1) Ex. "The Lord will not allow the righteous to hunger" (Prov. 10:3).
 - (2) Ex. "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).
 - **Reflective literature** This type of literature involves a discussion of the mysteries of life as found in Job and Ecclesiastes.

H. Prophetic "Prophetic literature is material that includes predictions of the future at the time of the writing of the material with injunctions often included that those who hear the prophecy adjust their lives in light of the predictions. . . ." (Zuck, pp. 134-35).

Example...Revelation

Excerpts from *Should Genesis Be Taken Literally*

by Russell Grigg

Chapters 12–50 of Genesis were very clearly written as authentic history, as they describe the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his 12 sons who were the ancestral heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Jewish people, from earliest biblical times to the present day, have always regarded this portion of Genesis as the true record of their nation's history.

So what about the first 11 chapters of Genesis, which are our main concern, as these are the ones that have incurred the most criticism from modern scholars, scientists, and skeptics?

Internal evidence of the book of Genesis

1. There is the internal evidence of the book of Genesis itself. As already mentioned, chapters 12–50 have always been regarded by the Jewish people as being the record of their own true history, and the style of writing contained in chapters 1–11 is not strikingly different from that in chapters 12–50.
2. Hebrew scholars of standing have always regarded this to be the case. Thus, Professor James Barr, Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, has written:

‘Probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story (c) Noah's flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark. Or, to put it negatively, the apologetic arguments which suppose the "days" of creation to be long eras of time, the figures of years not to be chronological, and the flood to be a merely local Mesopotamian flood, are not taken seriously by any such professors, as far as I know.’

Note that Prof. Barr does not claim to believe that Genesis is historically true; he is just telling us what, in his opinion, the language was meant to convey.

3. One of the main themes of Genesis is the Sovereignty of God. This is seen in God's actions in respect of four outstanding events in Genesis 1–11 (Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Babel dispersion), and His relationship to four outstanding people in Genesis 12–50 (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph). There is thus a unifying theme to the whole of the book of Genesis, which falls to the ground if any part is mythical and not true history; on the other hand, each portion reinforces the historical authenticity of the other.¹⁰
Evidence from the rest of the Bible

4. The principal people mentioned in Genesis chapters 1–11 are referred to as real—historical, not mythical—people in the rest of the Bible, often many times. For example, Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and Noah are referred to in 15 other books of the Bible.

5. The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the Creation of Adam and Eve as a real historical event, by quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in His teaching about divorce (Matthew 19:3–6; Mark 10:2–9), and by referring to Noah as a real historical person and the Flood as a real historical event, in His teaching about the 'coming of the Son of man' (Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27).

6. Unless the first 11 chapters of Genesis are authentic historical events, the rest of the Bible is incomplete and incomprehensible as to its full meaning. The theme of the Bible is Redemption, and may be outlined thus:

- i. God's redeeming purpose is revealed in Genesis 1–11,
- ii. God's redeeming purpose progresses from Genesis 12 to Jude 25, and
- iii. God's redeeming purpose is consummated in Revelation 1–22.

The historical truth of Genesis 1–11 shows that all mankind has come under the righteous anger of God and needs salvation from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

But why does mankind need to be redeemed? What is it that he needs to be redeemed from? The answer is given in Genesis 1–11, namely, from the ruin brought about by sin.

Unless we know that the entrance of sin to the human race was a true historical fact, God's purpose in providing a substitutionary atonement is a mystery. Conversely, the historical truth of Genesis 1–11 shows that all mankind has come under the righteous anger of God and needs salvation from the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

7. Unless the events of the first chapters of Genesis are true history, the Apostle Paul's explanation of the Gospel in Romans chapter 5 and of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 has no meaning. Paul writes: 'For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Jesus] shall many be made righteous' (Romans 5:19). And, 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ... And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit'(1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 45). The historical truth of the record concerning the first Adam is a guarantee that what God says in His Word about the last Adam [Jesus] is also true. Likewise, the historical, literal truth of the record concerning Jesus is a guarantee that what God says about the first Adam is also historically and literally true.

Hebrew scholar Dr Steven Boyd has shown that different types of verb (perfect and imperfect) are frequent in Hebrew poetry, but not in historical books. So from his verb analysis, he found that the probability that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is narrative (not poetry) is 0.99997.

Appendix...Covenant Theological Seminary: From Figurative Days to a Figurative Adam

Excerpts from The Quest for the Historical Adam by Dr. William Vandoodewaard at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

Among confessional Presbyterian institutions in the United States, the other major seminary was Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, the denominational seminary of the Presbyterian Church in America. Like many of the other Presbyterian seminaries, Covenant had previously allowed for a substantial latitude of views on the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, as evident in the teaching of R. Laird Harris (1911–2008) and Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984). Harris favored a day–age approach to Genesis 1, while Schaeffer viewed the length of days as undefined; both maintained a literal understanding of the creation of Adam and Eve. Robert Reymond had encouraged the maintenance of the literal tradition on Genesis 1 and 2; his departure from the seminary in 1990 reflected the changing milieu at the institution.

Following after Harris and Reymond, the new voice at Covenant on Genesis, hermeneutics, and human origins was C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament studies. Collins popularized the “analogical” hermeneutic, presenting the six days of the creation week as bearing all the markers held by the literal tradition, but arguing that as a whole it was a God- given analogy. The fulcrum for his argument was that “God’s Sabbath is not an ‘ordinary day’,” rather this “is part of an anthropomorphic presentation of God... The days are God’s work days, which need not to be identical to ours: they are instead analogous.” Thus, Collins viewed the days as “broadly consecutive” yet “of unspecified relation to time”—a position markedly similar to the day–age approach, but without the requirement of an exact chronological sequence of ages correspondent with the days. Beyond this, Collins argued that the terms “let there be” and “made” (cf. Genesis 1:3, 6, 14–17; Exodus 20:11) were not necessarily describing...the beginning of existence.

Collins claimed that such an approach was actually a “literal” approach to the text and should not be construed as “non–literal.” However, the result was more figurative than the day–age approach of his predecessors at Covenant...Collins went on to argue that while his view was compatible with old earth theory, it was “definitely not compatible with naturalistic theories of origins (or theistic evolutionary ones for that matter) because of its stance on God’s action.”

Collins more extensively published articles and a book defending an historical Adam and Eve...In these, he argued against reading Genesis with the understanding that “the author intended to relay ‘straight history’, with a minimum of figurative language.” Instead, Collins argued that the reader ought rather to believe that “the author was talking about what he thought were actual events, using literary and rhetorical techniques to shape the reader’s attitudes towards those events.” Where the literal tradition held these two points in harmony, Collins set the latter in opposition to the former.

...Collins proposed that the text of early Genesis was a “historical account.” Yet Collins’ definition of a “historical account” once again differed from that commonly held by proponents of the literal tradition.

Taking a cue from ancient Near Eastern writings including Mesopotamian origin and flood stories, Collins claimed that these “provide the context against which Genesis 1–11 are to be set, [and] provide us with clues on how to read this kind of literature.” He further stated

These [ancient Near Eastern] stories include divine action, symbolism, and imaginative elements; the purpose of the stories is to lay the foundation for a worldview, without being taken in a “literalistic” fashion. We should nevertheless see the story as having what we might call an “historical core,” though we must be careful in discerning what it is.

Collins suggestion that the intent in the early chapters of Genesis was to convey a “historical core” that was communicated in the midst of and through rhetorical and figurative elements, rested on two key assumptions: (1) that ancient Near Eastern religious–cosmological concepts were contextually formative to the writing of Genesis, and (2) that Mesopotamian myths were not taken in a “literalistic” fashion by ancient Mesopotamians—views extensively popularized by Wheaton College professor John Walton. Both the assumptions, however, lacked a foundation of documentary evidence...Not only was there no hard evidence to indicate that that ancient Mesopotamians read their narratives the way Collins...did; there was also no evidence the divinely inspired human author of Genesis did...

...While he had previously stated his “personal” commitment to a special creation of Adam from the soil, Collins now pursued what he felt were the maximal bounds of Christian orthodoxy in relation to his conception of the historicity of Adam and Eve...he argued that the bounds of “sound thinking” were met by the following requirements:

- (1) the image of God in man “could not be the outcome of natural processes alone”;
- (2) “we should see Adam and Eve at the headwaters of the human race”;
- (3) “the ‘fall,’ in whatever form it took, was both historical and moral, and occurred at the beginning of the human race”;

(4) “if someone should decide that there were, in fact, more human beings than just Adam and Eve at the beginning of mankind, then, in order to maintain good sense, he should envision these humans as a single tribe. Adam would then be the chieftan of this tribe (preferably produced before the others), and Eve would be his wife. This tribe “fell” under the leadership of Adam and Eve....

While maintaining the necessity of an actual Adam and Eve in history, Collins did so in a manner allowing for evolutionary biological processes in their origins, as long as there was some form of supernatural intervention in “refurbishing an existing hominid.” The other key maximal boundary in relation to origins was that Adam was “preferably” the first human produced, with Eve as his wife, while allowing for a separate production of their contemporaries—so long as they were a tribe which “fell” under the leadership of Adam and Eve.

... Collins concluded that despite the fact there were “many uncertainties” with his modifications, one could nonetheless hold to these views and at the same time “hold fast to the Biblical story line with full confidence.” In response to a query by a reviewer on the potential implications of his proposal, Collins responded

I should note that I share his discomfort with the prospect that “early humans committed bestiality, had half human, half animal offspring, and that offspring mated with other humans to such an extent that modern humans carry around perhaps as much as 4% animal genes,” and hope that it is not so.

Where Collins had stated a decade earlier that his analogical approach was incompatible with theistic evolution, he was now, though still committed to the same hermeneutic, unable or unwilling to discount the possibility of hominid–human hybrids; he supported the “evolved chieftain of a tribe” model as an option coherent with the teaching of Scripture....

Regarding his personal flexibility towards these options in light of contemporary DNA hypotheses Collins stated, “if genetics eventually forces reconsideration... [I] could perhaps reconceive of Adam and Eve as the king and queen of a larger population.” Collins’ quest for the historical Adam left a wide array of potential

Adams. Both his analogical hermeneutic and ensuing latitude on human origins proved influential among students; his views also received the support of Covenant Theological Seminary president Bryan Chapell.

Richard Belcher, Old Testament professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte and a proponent of the literal tradition, was one of the first Presbyterians to respond in print. He noted

The way Collins defines the traditional view is problematic because he omits from the discussion the very text that is at the heart of the debate. He explicitly says that how God created Adam in Genesis 2 is outside the purview of his analysis and that the origin of the material for Adam's body is not going to be addressed (p.13). In other words, he bypasses an exegesis of Genesis 2:7, the main text that should be at the center of this discussion... the traditional view, however, should include not just the historicity of Adam and Eve and the immediate special creation of Adam and Eve, but also the traditional understanding of Genesis 2:7, which is that God took soil from the ground and made Adam from it.

What Difference Does it Make?

Through the first eighteen centuries of Christian church history, commitment to a literal understanding of human origins was nearly monolithic among exegetes and theologians. This included the patristic and medieval clergy who held to the now obsolete alternative hermeneutical stream exemplified in Origen and Augustine. Nearly the entirety of Christendom held to an Adam and Eve who were the first human pair, without ancestry or contemporaries at their point of origin. Almost every Christian theologian, whether in the Roman Empire, the Eastern or Western church, Roman Catholicism or Reformation Protestantism—even most through the Enlightenment era—understood Adam and Eve as literally created in the manner described in Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 2:21–22.

Scripture and Hermeneutics

The literal tradition's approach to the early chapters of Genesis by necessity entails a literal Adam and Eve, created the sixth day. As the historical survey in

this volume has shown, numerous theologians have provided strong exegetical arguments for the understanding that the Genesis 1 and 2 account do indeed present the creation of Adam and Eve, as the first humans, specially created on the sixth day apart from any ancestry.

In doing so, the literal tradition does not negate the literary beauty and structure of the passage, but enables rich reflection on it and the unfolding themes of biblical theology, in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures.

Theologians such as C. John Collins' in his recent book *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* and his article "Adam and Eve in the Old Testament" makes an extensive theological and exegetical case for the existence of an Adam and Eve, but does so avoiding any exegetical comment on Genesis 2:7 or prior, granting latitude for the possibility of at least a partial Evolutionary Biological Process. Collins latitude leaves an *ad hoc* "Adam" whose origins lie in obscurity.

Marriage and Unity of Race

The literal understanding of the Genesis 2 account of Adam and Eve's creation, particularly the account of God's creation of Eve from Adam to be his wife as the first pair of humans, is the God-given origin of and paradigm for marriage as a union of male and female, husband and wife. This creation ordinance of marriage with its description of monogamous, heterosexual marital intimacy and desire is described as very good and sinless—made by God.

A complementarian view of marriage, with its distinct roles of husband and wife, finds its foundation in the creation of Eve from, for, and with Adam. In its description of marriage, family unit, one man, and one woman, Genesis 2:24–25 establishes patterns as literal and normative by virtue of the special, immediate creative action of God which has just been described. They stand as an expansion and implication of what is revealed in Genesis 1:27.

The literal reading of the Genesis 2 creation account in declaring that Adam and Eve were the first pair of humans, without ancestry or fellow humans in creation prior to the fall, is an explicit testimony to unity of race. All mankind, whether Australian aborigines, Asian, Caucasian, Africa, etc., are descended from Adam and Eve. Thus, all human beings bear God's image. Due to Eve's creation from

Adam's rib, there is a complete unity of race in Adam. Rather than multiple races, with some being potentially in a more advanced evolutionary stage than others, there is one human race, under one curse, with one Savior.

God, the Creator

In the literal view of the early chapters of Genesis, creation is not only a historical account of the beginnings of created reality, but also a revelation of God's creative activity. It shows the relation of creation to God and tells of God himself. His sovereignty over creation and His omnipotence in creation is powerfully emphasized in the literal view, as is the Creator/creation distinction. God is infinite and eternal; creation is finite with a distinct beginning in its whole and parts. God is autonomous and self-existent; creation exists under His sovereign rule and is upheld by His power. Subsequent created existence comes through mediate processes such as reproduction. The God who creates and sustains is no removed deity, nor an immanent one, setting into motion, or sustaining and guiding near eternal processes, in enacting His work of creation. He acts in sudden power and glory. The literal tradition's understanding of Genesis 1 and 2 provides a profound contextual emphasis on God's glory and power displayed through word or speech action and their glorious creative results, along with temporal immediacy and close intimacy in the creation of Adam and Eve. The literal approach sets the creation of Adam and Eve and their existence into the context of this self-revelation of God.

The Goodness of Creation

The literal view of the Genesis 1 account of God's creative work places a high value on the nature of God's original creation as "good," "very good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 19, 25, 31). It sees the reality of creation, prior to the temptation, as being free of sin, suffering, violence, and death—paradigmatic of the intended existence of the created order, including humanity in relation to God, one another, and the rest of creation. It sees the fall and curse as a point of drastic change into a world of continued sin, along with disorder, suffering, violence, and death—a creation now groaning for the restoration of all things (Romans 8:20-25). Scripture makes it clear that animal suffering is also not neutral (cf. Proverbs 12:10; Isaiah 11:6-9; Jonah 4:2, 11), but is connected to the fallen state, curse and judgment—and man bears responsibility in alleviating and minimizing

animal suffering. Again in Genesis there is not only revelation of God's creative activity, but of the relation of creation to God, and revelation of God himself.

The God who creates in acts of temporal immediacy, who creates a perfect creation without sin, suffering, violence and death, is himself very good. He is the one who will bring about a new creation without sin, disorder, suffering, violence and death. He is the one who is holy, and who will restore to holiness.

In Adam's fall sinned we all?

The literal reading of Genesis 1–3 indicates that Adam and Eve were created sinless, very good, and continued in an original state of conditional immortality, until the fall. According to the literal tradition on Genesis 1–3, until the fall into sin and the ensuing curse on the serpent (Satan), man, and creation, there was no suffering or death. With the fall into sin came the wages of sin—spiritual and physical death, the loss of immortality and separation from God. Then came God's declaration of the need for covering and His provision that pointed to redemption: the first reference to animal death in Scripture (Genesis 3:21). The reality of sin, suffering, and death is now inherent to humanity as the natural descendants of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12–21), all of whom are now conceived in sin, in spiritual death, destined for physical death. The hard new realities of sin, suffering, and death are explicit in Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Suffering and death also extend more broadly in creation.

In the literal view of creation, the reading of early Genesis provides every ground to recognize and expect that the work of redemption of fallen men, will be marked, illustrated, pursued, and confirmed with supernatural activity in history—activity in the midst of the natural order whose nature and/or timing can only be attributed to God. It is inexplicable by scientific method, though its effects were, and some still are, discernible by scientific methods. And so a global flood, the plagues of Egypt, the collapse of Jericho's walls, the miracles of prophets like Elijah and Elisha, are all expected indicators of divine sovereignty, presence, and activity.

These, and many more, are markers and confirmations of God's holy and gracious unfolding of redemptive history in Christ—each serving to reaffirm the veracity of God's special revelation by His Word.