

THE GENESIS CLASS

THE STARTING POINT: HOW TO USE THE INFORMATION IN GENESIS

Subtle Issues – How do you “interpret” this statement?

“Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.”

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy; Section III, Exposition, C, Inerrancy, Infallibility, Interpretation. (1978)

Significant Differences – Evangelical Christianity is now debating

- How to view inspiration and text
- *Ex Nihilo* versus “natural” creation
- Long ages versus recent creation
- Physical death: a necessary good or a curse?
- Noah’s Flood: world-wide or local.
- How to use “natural revelation”
- Role of “science” and “theology” in hermeneutics.

Conflicts with Genesis

- Is Genesis “real” history?
 - Text to be taken as “real” events
 - Text to be taken as “accurate” data
- Does Genesis “contain” a message?
 - Text to be understood via interpretation
 - Text to be subjected as “literature” and through “natural” revelation

Hermeneutics

- The “science” of interpretation is called *hermeneutics*.
- Taught to all Bible and seminary students
- Is “practiced” by every Bible reader

Hermeneutic Trilogy

- The **Reader** as the determiner of meaning
 - Each person who reads the text determines his or her own meaning of that text.

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- The **Author** as the determiner of meaning
 - What the author consciously willed to convey.
- The **Text** as the determiner of meaning
 - The text gives itself meaning.

Who or What Determines “Truth”?

- **Me?** (2 Peter 1:20)
 - My experience – my feelings – my logic
 - My schooling – my background – my family
- **Them or It?** (Acts 17:11)
 - Bible scholars – pastors – celebrities
 - Science – the majority – current events
- **The Written Word?** (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - Eternal – Exalted – Precise – Accurate
 - Sufficient – Complete – Preserved

Question # 1 – Is Genesis a historical narrative?

Six Hallmarks of History Writing

- **History is composed of narrative form.**
 - Genesis is obviously narrative
 - The type of language is different between narrative and poetic passages.
 - Dr. Steven Boyd – statistical difference in verb forms between narrative and poetic passages – 49% unique to narrative texts.
 - No reason – other than personal preference to treat Genesis as anything other than historical narrative
- **History is person and event centered.**
 - Without persons and events – there is no history. It really is that simple.
 - Genesis is obviously replete with persons and events.
 - The narrative format is obvious
 - The information is designed for historical verification
- **History writing is purposeful.**
 - Clearly definable objective
 - Movement in a certain direction

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- **History writing is coherent.**
 - It makes sense
 - The narrative holds together
 - It ought to have a storyline that integrates the whole account and provides it a central core.
- **History writing is self-consistent and non-contradictory.**
 - It may relate human inconsistencies
 - It must be free of illogical or self-negating elements.
 - It must present events as having occurred in a certain manner and at a certain time in a certain sequence.
- **History writing must be focused.**
 - The author must have a plan, pattern, agenda, and objective.
 - Genesis is verified as history on this criterion alone.
 - Genesis 1-11 covers creation to ~ 2100 BC
 - Events chosen are highly focused history
 - Very specific events, people, timing, dating, descriptions, etc.

Question # 2 – What would DIS-qualify Genesis as a historical narrative?

- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .the Supernatural**
 - If so, then all such supernatural events would disqualify much of the biblical record.
 - The call of Abraham
 - The Ten Plagues
 - Crossing the Red Sea; Manna; Mt Sinai
 - Jordon; Jericho; Joshua's long day
 - Resurrection
- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .the Miraculous**
 - If so, the enormous portions of the Old and New Testament must be discarded as fable, fiction, legend, or myth.
- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .Uniqueness**
 - If so, then the resurrection, creation, the Flood of Noah's day would need to be regarded as untrue or ridiculous exaggeration from mythological stories.
- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .Antiquity**
 - Modern "scholarship" would posit that the more ancient a document or the events described in documents, the less likely one can "believe" the actuality of the event.
 - The implication is that the ancients were incapable of recording actual historical events.

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- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .Religious or Theological Content**
 - Modern “scholarship” automatically disqualifies Texts as “historical” since the presence of deity in the text renders it religious and therefore non-historical.
 - What arrogance to declare that God can have no part in human history!
 - What foolishness to insist that only “natural” means can function in reality!
- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .Selectivity in Content**
 - “Scholars” would posit that such exclusion of other world events makes the author untrustworthy, and therefore, the document irrelevant.
 - Genesis, of course, was written to reveal events important to redemptive history, not to record the “History of Nearly Everything” (Bill Bryson)
- **Many Scholars Suggest . . .Non-narrative lists or tables**
 - Such things as lists, statistical tables, addresses, geographic descriptions, are regular features in historical accounts.
 - Genesis 1 – 11 contains two major genealogies (chapters 5, and 11) and a “Table of Nations (chapter 10) that are integral parts and supporting documentation of the historical narrative.

Question #3 – What does the Bible tell us about “natural” human intellect?

- **Biblical descriptions of man’s intellect:**
 - Debased (Rom. 1:28)
 - Blinded (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - Darkened (Eph. 4:18)
 - Deluded (Col. 1:21)
 - Sensuous (Col. 2:18)
 - Corrupted (2 Tim. 3:8)
 - Hardened (2 Cor. 3:14)
 - Futile (Eph. 4:17)
 - Hostile (Col. 1:21)
 - Deceived (Col. 2:8)
 - Depraved (1 Tim. 6:5)
 - Defiled (Titus 1:15)

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- **Biblical Warnings: Man is unable to change his blindness to God's truth.**
 - He does not understand God (1 Cor. 2:14)
 - He does not want God (Rom. 1:21-25)
 - He does not seek God (Rom. 3:11-18)
 - He cannot come to God on his own (Jn. 6:44)
 - He must be changed by God Himself (Is. 45:22-25)
- **Important Questions:**
 - Do we, by our scholarship, filter out the "life" of the Word?
 - Are we, by our science, polluting the pure information of God's revelation?
 - Given what we know about the sinful human condition, can we trust the secular mind to "interpret" God's revelation?
 - Could the best "process" be the one with the least human involvement—the least interpretation?

Question #4 – What does the Bible tell us about "natural" revelation?

- **"Natural" revelation is limited to the knowledge about God; it is not a source for all knowledge.**
 - Seven texts define general revelation:
 - Psalm 19:1-6
 - Acts 14:17
 - Romans 1:18-25
 - Ecclesiastes 3:11
 - Acts 17:23-31
 - Romans 2:14-15
 - Romans 10:18
- **The time span is of all time, not just more recent times (Psalm 19).**
 - Constant message while heavens last
 - Silent witness vs. words and ideas
 - Evidence can be observed everywhere
 - Predictability and precise order
 - Special revelation in Scripture is superior
 - Propositional (words, sentences, etc.)
 - Eternal and flawless

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- **Given as intuitive background**
 - For all time—not just later times
 - For all persons—not just technically trained
 - Acquisition is made by human sight and sense, not with scientific equipment or technique
 - Available immediately after creation—not progressive collection of knowledge

Question #5 – What does the Bible tell us about “special” revelation?

- **God demands accurate and precise reading.**
 - 2 Samuel 22:31
 - Psalm 12:6
 - Psalm 19:7-8
 - Psalm 119:172
 - Proverbs 30:5-6
 - Nehemiah 8:8
 - Revelation 1:3
- **God’s Word is not to be altered or deconstructed**
 - Deuteronomy 4:2
 - Matthew 5:18-19
 - John 10:35
 - 2 Peter 1:20
 - Revelation 22:18-19
- **God’s written Word is eternally valid.**
 - Matthew 24:34
 - Psalm 119:89, 160
 - Isaiah 40:8
 - 1 Peter 1:23
 - Psalm 138:2
 - Isaiah 55:11
- **God’s written Word is supernaturally pure.**
 - Psalm 12:6
 - Psalm 19:7-8
 - Psalm 119:172
- **God’s written Word is supernaturally precise.**
 - Proverbs 30:5-6
 - Nehemiah 8:8
 - Revelation 1:3
- **God’s written Word is supernaturally protected.**
 - John 10:35
 - 2 Peter 1:20
 - Matthew 5:18-19
 - 1 Peter 1:25

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- **God's written Word is supernaturally revealed.**
 - Deuteronomy 29:29
 - Romans 16:26
 - Revelation 1:1-3
 - John 15:15
 - John 20:30-31
 - Romans 16:26
- **God's written Word is supernaturally “inspired”**
 - 2 Peter 1:21
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - John 17:17
- **God's written Word is supernaturally “inscribed”**
 - The Ten Commandments
 - God's personal hand-written words
 - Exodus 31:18
 - Deuteronomy 9:10

The 4th Commandment

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-12)

“When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.” – M. R. De Haan (1891-1965), Founder of the Radio Bible Class

Literal Interpretation

- **Being in accordance with, conforming to, or upholding the primary meaning of a word or words.**
- **Avoiding exaggeration, metaphor, or embellishment**
- **Conforming or limited to the simplest, nonfigurative, or most obvious meaning of a word or words.**
 - NOT – every word has only one meaning
 - NOT – every passage can only be taken as hard fact
 - NOT – every sentence must be taken as redemptive truth
 - NOT – there are no passages of allegorical or figurative meanings
 - YES – every word of God is pure
 - YES – we are not to “add” or “delete”
 - YES – we are to revere and respect
 - YES – we are to study and obey
 - YES – we are to reject conflicts
 - YES – we are to embrace historicity, authenticity, accuracy, and authority

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- **We would accept the words of Genesis as historically accurate.**
 - That would mean that God created a “good” universe.
 - That would mean that the universe is “recent.”
 - That would mean that “progressive” and/or “evolutionary” creation is not taught by the words of Scripture.
- **We would reject any form of Naturalistic, Atheistic, or Evolutionary interpretation of the biblical record.**
 - Because it would exclude the supernatural involvement of God
 - Because it would refute or distort the character of God as revealed in the creation
 - Because it would demand an override of the clear words of God’s inspired “writings”

The Creationist Worldview

- **All reality conformed to God’s Word**
 - All Science
 - Empirical, testable, repeatable
 - All Human Endeavors
 - The “Genesis Mandate” was a commission to all humanity
 - All Nations, Cultures, and Peoples
 - Ultimately, everything will come under the authority of the Creator
- **Science**
 - Uncovers “how” things work.
 - Obedience to the “subdue” mandate
- **Technology**
 - Uses knowledge to “make” things useful.
 - Obedience to the “rule” mandate.
 -
- **Commerce**
 - Distributes the “useful things” to all.
 - Obedience to the “fill the earth” mandate.
 -
- **Education**
 - Teaches the “specialties” to everyone.
 - Obedience to the “teach all things” mandate.

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- **Humanities**

- Glorifies the Creator with praise and beauty.
- Obedience to the “to the glory of God” mandate.

The Choice

- **Man “decides” what God meant.**

- Science over Scripture
- Reason over Revelation
- Experience over Bible Doctrine

- **God “dictates” what Man believes.**

- Scripture over Man’s Atheistic Science
- Revelation over Man’s “natural” mind
- Biblical structure over Man’s “feelings” or “experience”

**I will worship toward thy holy temple,
and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth:
for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.
Psalm 138:2**