

Jesus and the Doctrine of Creation

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INTRODUCTION

To the faithful Christian, there is little of more importance than the proclamation and defense of the Old Jerusalem Gospel that is able to save men's souls. Christianity did not come into the world with a whimper, but a bang. It was not in the first century, nor is it intended to be in the twentieth, something "done in a corner." While it may be true to say regarding some religions that they flourish best in secrecy, such is not the case with Christianity. It is intended both to be presented, and to flourish, in the marketplace of ideas. In addition, it may be stated safely that while some religions eschew both open investigation and critical evaluation, Christianity welcomes both. It is a historical religion—the only one of all the major religions based upon an Individual rather than a mere ideology—which claims, and can document, an empty tomb for its Founder.

Christians, unlike adherents to many other religions, do not have an option regarding the distribution and/or dissemination of their faith. The efficacy of God's saving grace as made possible through His Son, Jesus Christ, is a message that all accountable men and women need to hear, and one that Christians are commanded to pronounce (John 3:16; Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Ezekiel 33:7-9).

From time to time, however, Christians may be afflicted with either an attitude of indifference, or spiritual myopia (shortsightedness). Both critically impair effectiveness in spreading the Gospel. A Christian's attitude of indifference may result from any number of factors, including such things as a person's own spiritual weakness, a downtrodden spirit, a lack of serious Bible study, etc. Spiritual myopia, on the other hand, is often the end product of either not having an adequate understanding of the Gospel message itself, or not wishing to engage in the controversy that sometimes is necessary to propagate that message.

One such example of spiritual myopia afflicting some members of the church today centers on the biblical teaching regarding creation. Because no one is particularly fond of either controversy or playing the part of the controversialist, it is not uncommon nowadays to hear someone say, "Why get involved in controversial 'peripheral' issues like creation and evolution? Just teach the Gospel." Or, one might hear it said that "since the Bible is not a textbook of science, and since it is the Rock of Ages which is important, and not the age of rocks, we should just 'preach Christ.' "

Such statements are clear and compelling evidence of spiritual shortsightedness, and belie a basic misunderstanding of the seriousness of the Bible's teachings on one of its most important topics. First, those who suggest that we not concern ourselves with "peripheral" topics such as creation and evolution, and that we instead "just preach the Gospel," fail to realize that the Gospel **includes creation** and **excludes evolution**. Second, those who advise us to simply "emphasize saving faith, not faith in creation," have apparently forgotten that the most magnificent chapter in all the Bible on the topic of faith (Hebrews 11) begins by stressing the importance of faith in the *ex nihilo* creation of all things by God (verse 3) as preliminary to any kind of meaningful faith in His promises. Third, in order to avoid the offense that may come from preaching the complete Gospel, some simply would regard creation as unimportant. God, however, considered it so important that it was the topic of His first revelation. The first chapter of Genesis is the very foundation of the rest of the biblical record. If the foundation is undermined, it will not be long until the superstructure built upon it collapses as well. Fourth, many Christians in our day and age have overlooked the impact on their own faith of **not teaching** what God has said about creation. G. Richard Culp put it well when he remarked: "One who doubts the Genesis account will not be the same man he once was, for his attitude toward Holy Scripture has been eroded by false teaching. Genesis is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, and it cannot be separated from the total Christian message" (1975, pp. 160-161).

Lastly, however, some Christians, afflicted with spiritual myopia, have advised us to "just preach Christ," all the while ignoring, or being uninformed of, the fact that Christ was the Creator before He became the Savior, and that His finished work of salvation is meaningful only in light of His finished work of creation (Hebrews 4:3-10). Furthermore, Christ and His inspired writers had a great deal to say on the topic of creation, and its relevance to a number of important issues. These teachings merit our serious attention, as the evidence below will document.

JESUS—AS THE CREATOR

As in all areas having to do with our faith, if we accept what Christ has to say regarding creation, we shall not err. His testimony is our guide, and one from which we should not stray. But what is the nature of that testimony?

Modernists and liberals would have us believe that while the creation account itself is not to be accepted as true, that should not significantly affect our dependence on the Christ who spoke of it as **being** true. For example, professor Van A. Harvey of Stanford University has commented that the "Christian faith is not belief in a miracle, it is the confidence that Jesus' witness is a true one" (1966, p. 274). What does he mean by such a statement? Listen as he explains further:

If we understand properly what is meant by faith, then this faith has no clear relation to any particular set of historical beliefs at all.... The conclusion one is driven to is that **the content of faith can as well be mediated through a historically false story** of a certain kind as through a true one, through a myth as well as through history (1966, pp. 280-281, emp. added).

In other words, genuine faith can as easily be grounded in falsehood as in truth! So, it is not whether Jesus actually **told** the truth, but whether we **believe** He told the truth that matters. It is our "confidence that Jesus' witness is a true one" that is important, not the truthfulness of what Jesus said.

What strikes one immediately about such a concept is the low estimate of the Savior it entails. If Jesus could use falsehoods to teach on so-called "peripheral" matters like creation, why could He then not also use falsehoods to teach on "essential" matters like salvation? And who among us becomes the final arbiter as to what is true and what is false? Surely the Lord's words of rebuke, as given to the two on the road to Emmaus, apply here: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). We serve a God Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). What Christ believed and taught, we, as His disciples, should believe and teach—with the full assurance that we shall be both accurate and safe in so doing. The question is, what did the Lord and His inspired writers teach regarding creation?

In several New Testament passages, we find evidence that Christ **was** the Creator! John 1:1-3 records, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made**" (emp. added). Christ was not just present during the events, but was the **active agent**, in creation. Paul affirmed that very thing in Colossians 1:16 when he observed that "**in him were all things created**, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: **all things have been created through him** and unto him" (emp. added).

The Hebrew writer observed that "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, **through whom also he made the worlds**" (Hebrews 1:1-2, emp. added). Paul told the early Christians, "Yet to us there is one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, **through whom are all things**, and we through him" (1 Corinthians 8:6, emp. added).

In commenting on these various passages, John C. Whitcomb observed:

It is highly instructive, therefore, for the Christian to turn to Genesis 1, which he accepts as a record of the creative acts of Jesus Christ in the light of John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2, and to recognize that the manner by which living things were brought into existence in the beginning finds its analogy in the miraculous works of Jesus Christ the Creator, who visited this planet less than 2,000 years ago **to show men that He indeed was fully capable of doing the things that Moses described by the Holy Spirit concerning the week of creation**" (1973, pp. 23-24, emp. added).

Dr. Whitcomb's point is well made. Christ's entire earthly ministry provided verification of the fact that He did exactly what the Scriptures attribute to Him in His work of creation. The importance of this must not be overlooked. If anyone had a right to speak on the events of that first week, He certainly did. He was there "in the beginning," and **He was the Creator!** That being the case, the question then becomes, "What did Jesus say about the creation?"

Jesus—On the Time Element of Creation

During His earthly sojourn, Christ spoke explicitly regarding the creation. In Mark 10:6, for example, He declared: "But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them." Note these three paramount truths: (1) The first couple was "made"; they were not biological accidents. Interestingly, the verb "made" in the Greek is in the aorist tense, implying point action, rather than progressive development (which would be characteristic of evolutionary activity). W.E. Vine made this very observation with reference to the composition of the human body in his comments on 1 Corinthians 12:18 (1951, p. 173). (2) The original pair was fashioned "male and female"; they were not initially an asexual "blob" that eventually experienced sexual diversion. (3) Adam and Eve existed "from the beginning of the creation." The Greek word for "beginning" is *arché*, and is used of "**absolute, denoting the beginning of the world** and of its history, the beginning of creation." The Greek word for "creation" is *ktiseos*, and denotes the "sum-total of what God has created" (Cremer, 1962, pp. 113,114,381, emp. in orig.). Christ certainly did not subscribe to the notion that the Earth was vastly older than humanity.

Unquestionably, then, Jesus placed the first humans at the very dawn of creation. To reject this clear truth, one must either contend that: (a) Christ knew the Universe was in existence billions of years before man, but, accommodating Himself to the ignorances of that age, deliberately misrepresented the situation; or (b) The Lord Himself, living in pre-scientific times, was uninformed about the matter. Either of these allegations, of course, is blasphemous.

In Luke 11:45-52, the Lord rebuked the rebellious Jews of His day and foretold the horrible destruction that would come upon them. He charged them with following in the footsteps of

their ancestors and hence announced that upon them would come “the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world.” Then, with parallelism characteristic of Hebrew expression, Christ rephrased the thought by saying, “from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah....”

The point not to be missed is that Jesus placed the murder of Abel back near “the foundation of the world.” Abel’s death occurred some years after the creation, but was close enough to that creation for Jesus to state that it was associated with “the beginning of the world.” If the world came into existence several billion years before the creation of mankind, how could the shedding of human blood be declared to have occurred at the “foundation of the world”?

In John 8:44, Christ referred to the devil, who “was a murderer from the beginning.” Once again, human existence is placed near “the beginning.” Isaiah asked this penetrating question of the people in His day: “Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?” (Isaiah 40:21). Notice how Isaiah corroborates Christ’s statements. Isaiah, too, places “the beginning” and “the foundations of the earth” in the same context. Paul, speaking in Romans 1:20-21, did likewise. He affirmed: “For the invisible things of him **since the creation of the world** are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse” (emp. added). Notice that the term “perceived” is from the Greek *noeo*, a word used for rational intelligence, while the phrase “clearly seen” (*kathoratai*) is an intensified form of *horao*, a term which “gives prominence to the discerning mind” (Thayer, 1958, p. 452). Paul’s point could not be clearer. The power and divinity of God, as revealed through the things that were created, have been observable to **human intelligence since the creation of the world**. Man has thus existed from the beginning; he is not some “johnny-come-lately” as evolutionary theories postulate. Nor was the Earth in existence billions of years prior to his existence, as some would have us believe. Again, the Lord’s testimony is not suspect; He was there!

Jesus—On the Foundational Importance of Creation

During the late 1940s, Woolsey Teller, second president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, debated Dr. James D. Bales of Harding College (as it was then known). During that debate, Mr. Teller made this piercing statement: “If evolution is accepted, Adam and Eve go out! That story, the Bible fable, is interesting mythology but it doesn’t present the true picture of the origin of man” (1976, p. 54). He was correct, of course, in stating that if evolution is true, the Bible cannot be.

Christ, however, placed His divine stamp of approval on the creation account in a number of ways. Consider the following.

1. In Matthew 19, the account is given of the Pharisees attempting to set the Lord against the law of Moses by inquiring about His position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In answering them, He asserted the permanence of the marriage bond by quoting Genesis 2:24—"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and the two shall become one flesh" (verse 5). In appealing to the creation of man and woman, as detailed in Genesis 2, the Lord made it clear that He accepted that account as both factual and historical and in so doing used it as the basis for the New Testament doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.
2. It is not uncommon to hear those who are anxious to compromise the biblical record of creation claim that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are two different, and contradictory, accounts. However, Jesus did not accept them as such. In Matthew 19:4-5 He tied the two together and used them to teach the people of His day: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female [quoting Genesis 1:27—BT], and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh [quoting Genesis 2:24—BT]...." If these were indeed different, and contradictory, accounts, Jesus apparently did not know it.
3. Jesus believed in the fixity of created **kinds**. He asked: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?... A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:16,18).
4. Jesus called Satan "the father of lies" (John 8:44), in what is a clear reference to the falsehood he told Eve in Genesis 3:4-5. Thus, Jesus also placed His imprimatur on the account of the fall of man.
5. Jesus accepted the Sabbath as a day of rest in commemoration of God's completed creation. In Mark 2:28 He told the people that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Yet the Sabbath as a Jewish holy day was instituted as a direct result of God's work during the six-day creation week of Genesis 1 and 2 (cf. Exodus 20:8-11). The Lord spoke approvingly of those events, and counted them as real, literal, and historical in nature.
6. Jesus stated to the disbelieving Jews of His day: "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47). Where, exactly, did Moses write of Christ? Genesis 3:15 is the first Messianic prophecy on record. Christ accepted that passage as correct. Whitcomb has noted: "It is the privilege of these men to dispense with an historical Adam if they so desire. But they do not at the same time have the privilege of

claiming that Jesus Christ spoke the truth. Adam and Christ stand or fall together” (1972, p. 111).

7. Jesus spoke of the Noahic flood as an actual occurrence in history (Matthew 24:37ff.). He even used that Flood in making a comparison to the destruction that would befall the Earth at His second coming. He referred to Abel as an actual historical character (Matthew 23:35). And, He advocated the view that the Universe actually had a beginning (as opposed to the popular view of His time that matter was eternal) when He remarked that “such was not **since the beginning of the world** [Greek, *kosmos*]” (Matthew 24:21, emp. added).

CONCLUSION

Why is creation so important? Simply put, the answer is this: “If there is no creation, there is nothing else. If there is no Creator, then there is no Saviour either” (Segraves, 1973, p. 24). Our understanding of creation depends upon our understanding of Christ, and vice versa. In Romans 5:14, Paul spoke of Adam “who is a **figure** of him who was to come” (emp. added). The word “figure” is the translation of the Greek word, *tupos* (type). Adam was a “type” of Christ; the two are thus inextricably linked. Paul extended that comparison to Adam in the great “resurrection chapter” when he said: “The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven...and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:45-48).

In 1 Corinthians 11:8,12, Paul contended that woman was “of man.” The Greek for the word “of” is *ek*, meaning “out of.” In 1 Timothy 2:13, Paul called Eve by name, denoting her as a literal, historical character. He noted that “the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Peter used the Flood to discuss an analogy of our salvation (1 Peter 3:21), and referred to the emerging Earth as something that actually had taken place (2 Peter 3:5b).

There are numerous other examples such as these that could be given if space allowed. The point, however, is well made. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, which we often refer to as the “creation chapters,” are an integral part of the biblical record. They are not warts or growths that may be shaved off, leaving the remainder intact. Jesus accepted them as correct and reliable, and used them as a basis for many of His teachings. If Adam turns out to be a myth, as many today would have us believe, Jesus is likewise reduced in stature. The two do indeed “stand or fall together.” Jesus’ teachings on creation stressed its importance. If it was important to Him, it should be equally as important to us as well.

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