

Foundations Theological Training Course

Week 6 – The Bible & Science

1) What is our starting point for discussing the Bible and science?

It's no small thing that the Bible begins with the words, "**In the beginning God...**"

- ' You will remember from last week that our God is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, and sovereign. He is the infinite, transcendent Lord and creator of the universe.
- ' He is the starting point of all things, and the proclamation of Genesis 1:1 is the beginning of any discussion that we might have on the Bible and science.

A second point to remember is from two weeks ago regarding 4 characteristics about the Bible that we discussed: clarity, necessity, sufficiency, and authority.

- ' Based on these characteristics of the Bible, we know the following facts about the Genesis creation story...
 - o Clarity: that it is understandable.
 - o Necessity: that the content is very important to us.
 - o Sufficiency: that it bears adequate detail for our needs.
 - o Authority: that we should believe it and live by it.
- ' Many Christians today, however, are skeptical about the scientific and historic validity of Genesis, and yet if you believe that we serve a supernatural God, then it shouldn't be difficult to embrace the biblical creation.
- ' This is a fundamental difference between how we look at the world and how an atheist might look at the world.
- ' Every religion, in fact every worldview, must come up with answers to 4 primary questions. These are...
 - o Origin -- where did I come from?
 - o Meaning -- why am I here, and what is my purpose?
 - o Morality -- why is man the way he is, morally and ethically speaking?
 - o Destiny -- where do I go when I die?
- ' It has been said that evolution is the creation story of atheists.
- ' If you embrace naturalism as your worldview, you are limited only to naturalistic explanations and answers to the questions above. If on the other hand, you believe in a supernatural God and creator, you can believe both in the natural laws and pathways that He created and in the possibility that He may have intervened in supernatural ways at any point along the way to accomplish His purposes.
- ' It is important to remember these foundational truths as we enter into a discussion of what the Bible teaches about creation.

2) What does the Bible teach about creation?

Six biblical truths about creation

1. Before anything else was created, **God** existed.

- There are two classes of things -- those that are created and those that are not created. We know this from some of the first principles of logic and physics...

The Law of Non-contradiction states that something cannot create itself because it would have to both exist and not exist at the same time.

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that energy and matter can neither be created nor destroyed.

- So we know that the **universe** could not create itself.
- We also know then that if there is anything in the universe that is created (i.e. *NOT* self-existent or transcendent), then there must also be something in the universe that is not created, to be the source for all else.
- The Bible teaches that the Triune God is eternal, everlasting, and transcendent over space and time. That He is that *One* uncreated thing, from which all else all had its **beginnings**.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1, 2 ESV)

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalms 90:2 ESV)

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58 ESV)

Everything which has being, except God Himself, rests upon the fact that God willed and brought it into creation. (Francis Schaeffer, Genesis in Space and Time)

2. God created all things, including **matter**, **energy**, **space**, and **time**, out of nothing.

- The phrase "the heavens and earth" includes the entire universe.
- The Bible teaches that God spoke ("Let there be...") the universe into being by creative command (i.e. *divine fiat*).
- God created all matter, energy, space, and time, from nothing (i.e. *ex nihilo*).

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. (Psalms 33:6,9 ESV)

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Revelation 4:11 ESV)

- The Bible, alone among sacred texts of all other major religions, refers to the creation of time.

No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. (1 Corinthians 2:6)

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time... (2 Timothy 1:9)

3. The creation story in Genesis is **historical**, not mythological or allegorical.

- The events of Genesis are referred to throughout the entire Bible, including the prophets, apostles, and Christ.

For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the Lord, and there is no other." (Isaiah 45:18)

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man... (Acts 19:24)

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' (Mark 10:6)

- Some of the most important aspects of our theology come from the first chapters of Genesis (sanctity of human life, marriage, God's plan for humanity, redemption, etc.).

4. God created Adam and Eve in His own image as **historical persons** and the first of all human beings.

- Of all God's creation, man alone is made in the very image of God (i.e. a spiritual being with a soul that lives on beyond physical life)

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being¹. Genesis 2:7 NASB; ¹ Literally, soul)

- Being made in the image of God is the basis for the **sanctity** of human life, a quality that is lost both from Eastern pantheism and Western materialism.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)

- Adam and Eve are referred to as actual **persons** throughout the Bible (in both the New and Old Testament).

Adam, Seth, Enosh... (1 Chronicles 1:1 ESV)

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made

them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? (Matthew 19:4, 5 ESV)

For Adam was formed first, then Eve; (1 Timothy 2:13 ESV)

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. (Romans 5:14 ESV)

5. Creation took place in an ordered **sequence** of events, in 6 days or periods of time.
 - Creation was accomplished in six discrete steps or stages.
 - The interpretation of the Hebrew word yom, as it occurs in the early chapters of Genesis, has been the cause of great division among conservative, evangelical theologians. The word literally means a discrete period of time with its exact meaning being derived from the context in which it is used (contrast Genesis 1 to 2)
 - One view holds that because yom in Genesis chapter 1 is in association with the words “evening” and “morning” that it should refer here to a strict 24-hour day. This view is often referred to as the “young earth view” because it implies that all of creation would had to have been completed within a period of six days, with Adam being created on day six.
 - Consequently, if the historical Adam lived on earth within the last 10,000 years, an approximate date that is based upon Biblical genealogies, then the entire universe, by necessity, is approximately 10,000 years old.
 - Critics of this view cite a number of objections, including...
 - That there are other places in Genesis, namely in chapter 2:2, where it says, “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made earth and heaven, using the same Greek word *yom* to refer to the entire six day period.
 - That the definition of a day, involving the concept of morning and evening, as implied by the sun and moon ruling over the day and night, was non-existent until day 4 of creation
 - That according to Genesis chapter 1, Adam and Eve were both created on day 6, yet in Genesis 2 it would seem that there was a significant lapse of time (much more than 24 hours) separating Adam’s creation from Eve’s creation.
 - That a 10,000 year-old universe is incompatible with the observations from numerous fields of science and history and that the universe bears the appearance of great age.
6. God created the universe for His own glory and considers it to be **very good**.

- God reveals Himself and His glory through the creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalms 19:1 ESV)

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20 ESV)

- God completed creation on the 6th day and called the creation “very good”, and on the 7th day He rested.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 1:31-2:3 ESV)

3) What about evolution and how do we reconcile differences between the Bible and science?

Five possibilities to consider (from Schaeffer, No Final Conflict – not necessarily promoted but only identified as possible)...

- The possibility that God created a “mature” universe.
 - The universe has the appearance of 14 billion years old, but is actually only 10,000 years old and was created replete with fossils
- The possibility of breaks or gaps between the first few verses of Genesis.
 - There could possibly have been long gaps of time between 1:1 and 1:2, and 1:2 and 1:3, when the created universe rested in a state of disorder.
- The possibility that the “days” of Genesis 1 represent long periods of time.
 - Based on the debate over the meaning of the Hebrew word *yom* and the implications of Psalm 90:4, which is attributed to Moses

For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4 NASB)
 - NT support that God sees time in a different way than we see it.

Dear friends, here is one thing you must not forget. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day. (2 Peter 3:8 NIV)
- The possibility that the flood affected the geological record.

- Some have argued that a universal flood would have altered the strata that are studied in geological dating or that it possibly changed decay rates or other factors that affect assumptions of geological uniformity.
5. The possibility that where the Hebrew word *bara* is not used in Genesis there could be a creative sequence from previously existing things.
- *Bara* is used three times in Genesis 1 – for the original creation from nothing, for the creation of “conscious” life (i.e. not plants, trees, etc.), and for the creation of man. In other places, the words “let” or “made” were used, which could have allowed for other creative processes (i.e. such as evolution from previously existing organisms).

The main point that Schaeffer makes in all of this is that our understanding both of science and of the Scriptures is limited and that our knowledge is imperfect. Therefore, we should approach issues that cross-cut the Bible and science with confidence that when all the facts are understood, there will be no final conflict, because all truth is God’s truth.

4) What does the Bible teach regarding miracles?

Miracle defined: *A miracle is a less common kind of God’s activity in which he arouses people’s awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.* (Grudem, Systematic Theology)

Examples:

- The incarnation of Jesus as the God-man
- Jesus’ resurrection
- The raising of Lazarus from the dead
- The parting of the Red Sea
- The fire from heaven that Elijah called down in response to the prophets of Baal
- Incredible answers to prayers that arouse the awe of God

The purpose of miracles:

1. To authenticate the message of the Gospel

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2 ESV)

2. To bear witness to the fact that the kingdom of God has come and has begun.

And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. (Matthew 10:7-8 ESV)

3. To help those who are in need.

And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to

do for you?” They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.” And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:30-34 ESV)

4. To remove **hindrances** to people’s ministries.

The story in Acts 9:39-44 of Tabitha (Dorcas) who was a woman of great Christian love and service who died but was raised from the dead through Peter’s prayers so that she could return to her ministry.

5. To bring **glory** to God.

For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. (Matthew 9:5-8 ESV)

Some different usages of the term “miracle” (From R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*)

1. Common things that point to an uncommon cause in the power of God (i.e. the birth of a baby or the wonder of the cosmos)
2. God’s working through secondary means at a specific time or place (i.e. the Star of Bethlehem, which may have been an alignment of planets or a supernova)
3. Supernatural acts of God (i.e. turning water into wine or raising Lazarus from the dead)

These different classes of miracles are often distinguished in the Bible with the Greek words for signs (*semeion*), wonders (*teras*), and powers (*dunamis*), all of which may be referred to as miracles.

Three views on the relevance of miracles today (From R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*)

1. The skeptic view that denies all miracles – past, present, and future.
2. Supernatural miracles happened during Bible times, but ceases once the revelation of Scripture was complete.
3. Supernatural miracles occurred during Bible times and still occur today.

Should Christians seek miracles today?

*“When we encounter serious needs in people’s lives today, it is right for us to seek God for an answer, and where miraculous intervention seems to be needed, then to ask God if he would be pleased to work in that way. This would seem to be especially appropriate when our motivation is a Christ-like compassion for those in need and a burning desire to see Christ’s kingdom advance and his name glorified.” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*)*

At Foundations Church, our pastors and elders pray for God's miracles (i.e. special interventions and healing), whether through natural or supernatural causes.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (James 5:14-15 ESV)

5) Concluding thoughts and the Bible and science

Because we believe that **all** Scripture is inspired by God, we must hold that the highest respect for the Bible.

This fact is important as it relates to the tendency of some to explain away the existence of miracles or discount God's supernatural involvement the creation of the world.

If we attempt to discredit Genesis as a historical account, we very quickly find ourselves at odds with the prophets, apostles, and with Christ Himself.

If we began to **discard** portions of the Scriptures because our understanding of them does not fit with our current understanding of science (which is constantly changing), we emasculate the Scriptures, stripping them of their power and meaning.

The words of Francis Schaeffer from his essay *No Final Conflict* provide an apt conclusion:

"What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if significant numbers of those under the name of evangelical no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical? If this continues, we are not faithful to what the Bible claims for itself and we are not faithful to what Jesus Christ claims for the Scriptures. But also -- let us not ever forget -- if this continues, we and our children will not be ready for difficult days ahead. Furthermore, if we acquiesce we will no longer be the redeeming salt for our culture..."

6) What does Foundations Church believe about creation?

God

We believe in one God - holy, eternal, all-knowing, perfect, and sovereign over all things - who created all things and graciously proposed from the beginning of time to reconcile man to Himself and to make all things new for His own glory. He exists in three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His own Image and that they were tempted by Satan and fell into sin. Because of the sin of Adam, all human beings are sinners, both by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and subject to His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can man be redeemed and restored to good standing with God.

7) Discussion Questions:

1. Is man's soul eternal?
2. In Genesis 2:15, when God put man into the Garden of Eden and commanded him to cultivate it and keep it, what are the implications of this today to our mission and mandate as His followers?
3. Why is it critical that we maintain a high view of Scripture?
4. Do you personally feel that your understanding of biblical creation contradicts your understanding of a modern scientific view of origins? Why or Why not?
5. Is the Big Bang Theory consistent with biblical creation?
6. Do you see this information to be important to you spiritually? Why or why not?
7. Do you believe that miracles still happen today? Why or why not?