

Supplementary Notes to Genesis 1 and 2

The seven days of Genesis 1 are literal 24 hour days. They show the immense creative wisdom, power and grace of God in His creation. The seven days also can be interpreted figuratively in at least three ways.

1. They may reflect the ages of time in the past before the first day, Genesis 1:3. Applying the seven days to past ages was, and still is, a common and largely valid interpretation of chapter one and has been adequately documented and discussed for over two centuries.
2. They may foreshadow the ages of time commencing after the seven day account which ends with Genesis 2:4. Applying the seven days to the history of the world and, prophetically, its future ages has also been attempted with some success. For a good example see "The Course of Time from Eternity to Eternity" a chart and companion booklet with key, by A. E. Booth, written mid 20th century.
3. They may give us insight into the progressive work of God in the believer, including new birth and subsequent growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, 2Peter 3:18.

Clearly the book of Genesis is authentic. It is referred to many times in Old and New Testaments including by the Lord Jesus Himself. In the 19th century many scholarly (but ungodly) critics attacked its veracity and historical validity. They denied man knew how to write when Genesis was written. Twentieth century archaeological finds have shown how wrong they were, yet the error they advanced persists in the media and textbooks and still influences many to discredit the scriptures as the word of God. Not only could men write, they left many thousands of baked clay tablets behind inscribed with cuneiform writing, some with historical records corroborating the Biblical record. These were far more durable writing media than paper or skins. At least one archeologist has detected evidence in the book of Genesis that its author had used and quoted original source records in the same form normally used for cuneiform inscriptions on clay tablets. See "Ancient records and the Structure of Genesis" by P. J. Wiseman, c 1936, revised 1985. The markers for eleven different source records, some with more than one tablet per record, have been faithfully but unknowingly preserved in the text of our English translations. The key to these markers is the statement "these are the generations of (genesis of, story of, history of) . . ." Most people have thought this recurring phrase introduces the next record but it really just closes and labels the previous record. Check it out. The first of these occurs in chapter 2:4. It marks and titles the prior passage commencing with Genesis 1:1:

"The generations of the heavens and of the earth
when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and
the heavens"

The next section ends with Genesis 5:1.

This is the book of the generations of Adam.

In the day that God created man, in the
likeness of God made he him;

This understanding, that Genesis was compiled from a progression of separate genuine written records preserved and handed down to Moses, refutes attempts by unbelieving scholars to discredit the validity and integrity of the Genesis record by bringing into question its authorship by Moses. Some of them claim to have identified more than one author by examination of the text. But if Moses is viewed as the inspired compiler and annotator of ancient genuine original authoritative written records which he had in-hand their contrived controversy regarding his authorship dissolves.

Rest assured Genesis is God's inspired word, that Genesis has deep authentic roots, and is inspired scripture. It is widely and frequently quoted as authoritative throughout the whole Bible by many credible men, including by the Lord Jesus Himself.

In recent decades a very public controversy has been raging regarding the teaching of evolution in the schools. Some earnest, godly Christians have taken it upon themselves to oppose the teaching of the theory of evolution as fact and to disprove the validity of the theory itself. One mode of attack is to attempt to discredit the long periods of time, millions of years, required for evolutionary processes to work. "Creation science" groups are doing research that claims to discredit both modern dating methods and the necessity for long periods of time postulated by many scientists for deposition of sediments and formation of fossils found worldwide. These and other Christians interpret Genesis 1:1 to be part of the six days creation rather than a separate earlier beginning with an intervening catastrophe. They say the worldwide flood of Noah's time fully explains the sedimentary rock and fossils found worldwide. They could be right. However if there were long periods of time before verse 3 of Genesis 1 that would not implicitly justify the theory of evolution. God is Creator and Sustainer. If He brings about extinction of some species, He also creates them again, Psalm 104:27 -30.

Nevertheless discussions and feelings among Christians about the creation story and the flood can sometimes get heated and divisive. Yet both sides firmly believe and hold that God created the heavens and the earth and both hold that He completed present earth in the six days of Genesis. Those with opposing views as to details need to be cautious not to create schisms and divisions among believers regarding interpretations that do not deny God's role in the creation, and hold Jesus Christ as God the Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. The Lord does not authorize divisions among believers over such issues of secondary importance. We will all know the real story when we reach heaven and certainly will all be delightfully surprised.

By Ronald Canner, March 10, 2010