

IV. Conclusion

- A. In order for us to understand what it does say, we have to stop seeing it as an answer to all our scientific curiosities.

- B. We cannot read Genesis 1 as if the discoveries of modern science are to be found in the text of Genesis.

- C. Genesis 1 must be read for what the original author intended to say to the original audience in the framework of their understanding of the world then.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Why is it difficult for us, even as believers, to read Genesis and learn the worldview God intended it to teach us?
- Why do scientist not search for ultimate causes, and we don't want them to start? Can you think of examples of how this would be a problem?
- What does Psalm 139:13 tell us about where babies come from? Is this a scientific answer to the question of origins? Explain. What might this say about our approach to Genesis 1?
- Explain the two story house analogy of the world. In what ways is this a good analogy? In what ways does it quickly fall apart?
- What do you think of the statement that science can neither prove or disprove the existence of God because it is not studying, nor should it study the first cause? Discuss.
- Why must we not say that God works in the world through the *natural laws*, or that God can intervene in the *natural order of things*? What is wrong with those statements?

Genesis: Truth for Understanding Our World (Part 1)

Jerry Cisar — September 13, 2015

Text: Genesis 1:1-3

Introduction

- A. Genesis 1 was not written to answer the questions of the 21st century mind, but the questions of the 2nd millennium BC mind.

- B. Before Genesis 1 can help us understand and make sense out of the world in which we live, we have to read it for what it intended to communicate.

I. "In the Beginning..." (Genesis 1:1)

- A. How would the Israelite mind have understood, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*"?
 - i. Is it a statement of what happened before the rest of the chapter:

 - ii. Is it a summary of the chapter that follows:

- B. Our desire to make scripture correspond to scientific discoveries cannot be what drives our interpretation.

II. "Now the earth was formless and empty..." (1:2)

- A. The earth is clearly not yet in any condition to function for the purpose for which God created it.

Walton offers this paraphrase: "*The earth was nonfunctional; primordial, watery darkness prevailed, and a supernatural wind that was permeated with the power of God circulated over the surface of the waters.*"

- B. Science does not search for ultimate causes, and we don't want them to start.
 - i. The role of science is to study secondary causes only.
 - a) **Psalm 139:13** *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
 - b) But that is not the only thing I explained to my children when they were growing up.
 - Science strives to describe the processes God uses.
 - c) It is not the job of the scientist to say, "*There was no personal being behind this, that was only random chance.*"
 - d) But neither is it the job of the scientist to say, "*Now what caused this was that God said, or did, or...*". It is the scientist's job to keep looking for more secondary causes.

- ii. Science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God, because it is not studying, nor should it study, the first cause (since it can't be observed).

III. "And God said..." (1:3)

- A. God is actively involved in bringing the world into order for the purposes for which He created it.
 - i. *And God said* is about the ultimate cause ordering the world, it is not the secondary causes. (Compare 1:26-28 with 2:7, 18-25.)
 - ii. We must not say that God works in the world through the *natural laws*, or that God can intervene in the *natural order of things*.
 - a) **Why not?** Because to say these things presupposes that things can operate on their own apart from God, or that there is something called a *natural law* that operates independently of God.
 - b) What would happen if God died? What would change if there were not God?
- B. From **our** perspective the world is like a two story house.
 - i. The downstairs is what we can see and observe. The upstairs is that which we cannot see. That is the realm in which God exists.
 - ii. But to keep the analogy from falling apart quickly, we have to understand that from God's perspective there isn't a floor on the 2nd story... He moves in both realms equally, though unseen in the downstairs.