

Science & Faith: A Pastor's Perspective

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[0:00] for questions. So, just started the recording. Okay, so we're faith and science this morning. So, just a few general remarks about Christianity and science to sort of begin. So, many people assume that there is this inherent conflict, and that there's always been this conflict between faithful believers and scientific rationalists. But that's not a good way to, that's not even true historically. Okay, so if you look at, say, the early modern period in Europe, like 16th, 17th, 18th century, that's when modern sort of experimental science was developed. And, in fact, the modern experimental science is based on some assumptions that are very consistent with the picture the Bible paints the world in. So, particularly three assumptions, the world is orderly, so it's not completely chaotic or random. The world is intelligible. In other words, human beings can understand that order at some level. And the world is contingent. Now, contingent just means it doesn't necessarily have to be exactly that way. So, you sort of have to, like, discover what it is rather than just think your way to what it must be. And those are the assumptions, those, you have to believe those assumptions in order to do experimental science.

You have to believe there's some order that you're trying to find, that you, as, that we as human beings have some way of understanding that order, and that we're not just going to figure it out by reasoning our way to it, but by discovering it experimentally. Now, lo and behold, right, that's the picture of the world that, those are three assumptions behind the picture of the world the Bible gives, right? The Bible, the world is orderly because God, God's made it, and it reflects some of his wisdom and order. As human beings made in God's image, we have an ability to understand that, not perfectly, but at some level. And the world doesn't necessarily have to be the way it is.

God could have made it differently. So, so it's interesting. God set up the world so we can explore its workings and marvel at, and often be surprised by its variety and vastness, right? If you look at the history of science, it's a history of surprising discoveries, right? That many times people didn't expect and resisted for a long time and thought it must not be this way, and finally you get to the point you're like, boy, we've got to change our whole way of thinking about these things. I've included a few quotes from some older scientists and some more recent scientists who are Christian believers.

We could add many more of these, but just some examples of scientists who had a sort of profound prayer life, were committed church members, loved Jesus Christ, believed the Bible. Anyway, these are just a few examples. I won't read them for you. And just broadly speaking, according to the Bible, God's revealed himself in the world that he's created, that it sort of displays his handiwork, as well as in the words of the Bible. So if we understand them correctly, science, seeking to understand the world that God has made in scripture, seeking to receive and rightly interpret the words that God has spoken, really should reinforce each other and sort of bear witness to God's glory together. Of course, there's a problem that in this fallen world, we don't always see things rightly.

That's one of the effects of sin and sort of living in a broken world, is it, our understanding, our categories get confused and, you know, we think we see things that we don't see and we put things together in ways that maybe isn't the best way to put them together.

[3 : 49] And that happens both in how we understand science, right? If you look at the history of science, there's many times people thought, of course, you think the world must be this way, and today nobody believes that, right? And if you look at the history of interpreting the Bible, right? I mean, right, that's why we're having this conversation, because sometimes we struggle to know how do we interpret the Bible? You know, yes, there's a clarity to the main message of the Bible, and God's given us his Holy Spirit to help us, but still we struggle. We struggle to really, to understand especially some of the details, some of the more challenging parts.

So today I want to focus on how we interpret the Scripture and how that relates to some sort of modern questions. Now, I'm not a scientist. I've never been a scientist. I was a history major in college, sort of, you know, I took a couple science classes because I had to. I enjoyed them and appreciated them, but I'm not going to try to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different scientific theories. So I'm not going to make pronouncements about, you know, whether this theory is really strongly well established or whether this theory is more provisional. And anyone who's in the sciences knows that there's a range, right? Some scientific theories, they're pretty well established, and there's lots of evidence behind them, and it would be pretty hard to completely throw them out. And other theories are more provisional, sort of like, well, this is the best we can do right now, but we're still working on it, and maybe this isn't quite the best model.

Maybe we'll improve on what we know. But I do want to help us interpret the Bible carefully, because that is my job as a pastor, right? That's my particular responsibility. So that's what I'm going to focus on this morning. So two basic guidelines for interpreting Genesis. I think broadly speaking, from a Christian point of view, we can affirm two things, at least these two things, about Genesis. First, there's plenty of symbolic and figurative language in Genesis.

Genesis. And you can even demonstrate that from the rest of the Bible, because the rest of the Bible refers back to Genesis and refers to some of the imagery in some passages that are obviously poetic or symbolic. For example, Proverbs talks about wisdom as the tree of life. Ezekiel 31 talks about Pharaoh as a tree in God's garden. Obviously, it's not speaking literally there, right? But it's using the imagery. Ezekiel 47, there's a river of heavenly life flowing out of the temple, Revelation, a lot of Garden of Eden imagery appears in Revelation, as well as the serpent, right? Who is also a dragon in Revelation. Anyway, so there's symbolic and figurative language in Genesis.

I think when we approach Genesis, we should remember Genesis is not written, is not primarily aiming at scientific precision or exactness. It's also not a complete survey of ancient history.

[6 : 44] So Genesis does not tell us about all the people who ever existed ever in the world, right? No, that's not the purpose of Genesis. In fact, if Genesis was doing either of those things, it would be so long that we would never get through it. And we would also miss the point of who is Genesis introducing us to? Genesis is introducing us to the one true God, who's the king over the whole world. So we want to understand Genesis in light of what its purpose was.

And also that, remember, Genesis was written about 3,500 years ago. And so we need to ask, what would Genesis have meant back then, right? When some of the conversations that we're having today, right, for example, Darwin's theory of evolution, like nobody was exactly discussing that back then, because Darwin hadn't, you know, Darwin was thousands of years of the future, right? So we need to start by asking, what did Genesis mean back then? And then we can apply it. Of course, we need to ask the question, what implications does Genesis have? And how does it relate to some of these modern scientific theories, right? But we want to sort of start with taking Genesis as it is.

Now, that's what we've tried to do in the sermons. And that's affecting how we've approached the sermon series. And while we haven't sort of immediately dived into some of these science and faith questions, but we also want to deal with the science and faith questions, which is why we're having a class today. Okay, so that's the first thing. Christian interpretation of Genesis can affirm there's figurative and symbolic language in Genesis. It's not primarily a scientific treatise. But the second thing that I think Christians should affirm about Genesis is Genesis is referring to real events.

So it's not just an imaginative story that has no basis or no connection to any historical reality. One of the fundamental claims of the Bible is that we're talking about a God who actually works in history with real people through his providence, sometimes even through miracles, ultimately by sending his son Jesus Christ into the world. So one particular example of this is the Apostle Paul speaks of Adam as a person who was as real as Jesus Christ in passages like 1 Corinthians 5, 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5. Now we'll get back to that claim later on and some of its implications.

So those are, I think, sort of two sort of broad things that we can affirm. Now many people ask this question, should we seek to harmonize or sort of, you know, develop a sort of grand unified theory of Genesis combined with modern science, right? You know, should we sort of seek to merge these together into one coherent picture? Now many of us, our instinct is, yeah, we'd love to do that. Boy, wouldn't that be amazing if Genesis sort of shows us how God's glory is revealed in every scientific theory and it shows us the big picture and we can put it all together.

[10:02] But I want to give a few warnings before we try to run down that road. Okay, so a few cautions. First, for the most part, science and the Bible are focused on exploring and answering different questions. So the main purpose of science is looking at questions like how and when. How do things normally happen in the natural world? When do things normally happen? So science doesn't tell us why something exists rather than nothing. Science also can't really rule out the possibility of divine intervention or miracles or providence in the world, right? Science doesn't really have a way to, you know, you can't, you can't demonstrate by repeated experiments. You can't demonstrate miracles by repeated experiments, right? Because the whole point of miracles is God chooses to intervene the way he wants to. And he's not necessarily going to do it again the same way. So, you know, science is dealing with how and when. The Bible is primarily dealing with why and who. Why are we here who made us?

So there's some overlap in what science and scripture are dealing with, but I actually think that most of the questions science and science and the Bible are dealing with are sort of just both important, but they're different realms. Now, there is an overlap, and that's what we're trying to deal with today. But we should remember this. Second, scientific theories have changed over time, often in ways that nobody could have predicted at the time. Again, this doesn't mean we should just ignore the findings of careful scientists or just dismiss everything that scientists say, but sometimes we can look back on previous attempts where people have thought, oh, scripture, you know, sort of attempts to harmonize science and scripture, and we can see obvious flaws in the science of the day. So, for example, some, there was the whole controversy about does the sun go around the earth or does the earth go around the sun? And some people thought, well, of course, the sun goes around the earth, and of course, the psalms teach that. Now, almost nobody believes the sun goes around the earth today. And was it a good idea to think that the psalm teaches that? No, the psalms are poems, right? They're songs, right? They use, like, regular, they use imagery, right? The sun rises and goes like a champion from one end of the sky to the other, right? You know, it's not saying the sun's a living being. It's just saying, like, it's just, it's a picture, right? So, so we have to be careful that we don't sort of connect the Bible to scientific theories that might change, and then we think the

Bible's supporting something that has been demonstrated probably not to be true, right? That's, that's a problem we can learn from our, from, from our sort of past mistakes of other Christians. Third, there's a danger of projecting our own opinions or our culture's assumptions or current controversies onto scripture itself, right? So is, were the authors of the Bible trying to teach us whether the earth is flat or round, whether the sun goes around the earth, or whether the earth goes around the sun? Now, I think the answer is very unlikely, right? We don't, you know, if you think about, like, the Israelites walking through the desert, like, is that one of their concerns? Probably not, right? You know, is, is that the language that, that, that, anyway. So, biblical writers use poetic language, they use ordinary speech, we even speak the same way, right? So when sun rise, right? Even though technically, okay, it's like the earth's turning, right? We don't always use technical language, we just use normal language, and the Bible tends to use everyday language. Or common concepts, I won't get into this one, but the firmament in the midst of the waters, or the expanse above the waters, sort of the idea of, like, a canopy or a tent, is the sky, there's waters above that, waters below that.

That was a common concept in the ancient world. I don't think Genesis 1 is sort of making a scientific pronouncement about, like, the structure of the sky and the earth, and et cetera, et cetera.

It's just using common concepts that everybody would have understood, okay? Last caution, very few people have both extensive scientific expertise, and there's many branches of science. So a physicist is not a biologist, is not a chemist, now you can be a biochemist, I mean, you can be at the intersection of these fields, but, but right, even if you're a scientist, your expertise will tend to be in one field. And very few people have expertise in science and expertise in, and training in historical background of the Bible, cultural background of the Bible. So, so many people who try to sort of bring these together are experts in one area, but they're sort of relying on other people in another area. And again, so for all these reasons, I think we need to be very cautious about attempting to sort of unify the result, sort of do this harmonizing work, okay? It's a legitimate area of exploration, right? That's part of what we're working through this morning, but there are many reasons to be cautious, and often I think the right posture has some humility to it to say, we might be wrong, but here's what might be plausible, right? Proverbs indicates that the one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and questions him, and that applies to lots of things, right? You got to hear both sides of the story, and sometimes that takes a while to sort of sort that out. Okay, so these are sort of general comments. Let's jump into a few specific areas relevant to the opening chapters of Genesis Science and Faith. First issue is how do we interpret the days of creation in Genesis 1? God's creation happens over a period of six days in Genesis 1 through chapter 2, verse 3. There are basically three main interpretations of these days, okay? Interpretation number one is 24-hour literal view. These were six 24-hour days that happened in a row.

[16:46] According to this view, the Earth is probably pretty young. The only exception to that is the gap theory, which I put in a footnote, but hardly anybody believes gap theory anymore, so I'm not going to deal with that.

If you do believe gap theory, we can talk about it. I think that's unlikely, but we can discuss that. But most people who take the 24-hour view would say, well, yeah, that means it all happened in the course of 144 hours, and the Earth is relatively young. Now, strong points of this view, well, it seems to be the most straightforward understanding, right? There was evening and there was morning the first day.

There was evening, there was morning the second day. You know, doesn't that settle the case? It's probably also the most common interpretation throughout church history, but we'll get back to that one. But it is certainly a very common interpretation, probably the most common. Some objections to this view from the biblical text itself.

So, some sort of questions or problems for this view. Sun, moon, and stars don't appear until day four. So, what kind of days are we dealing with before the sun, moon, and stars come on the scene?

Second issue or problem is the seventh day seemed to last more than 24 hours, right? God rests from his work on the seventh day. And you might say, well, what happens on the eighth day? Well, it doesn't seem like God gets up again and then goes on to create a different universe, right? And in fact, the rest of the Bible seems to imply that that seventh day continues. So, Hebrews 4 talks about entering into God's Sabbath rest. It says, God's works were finished since the creation of the world.

[18:39] In other words, God's sort of inviting us to join him in that sort of final rest. So, you know, if the seventh day lasts more than 24 hours, then it might imply that the other days, maybe we're not just dealing with sort of six consecutive 24-hour days. And some other people have argued that the Hebrew word translated day can also mean period of time in other contexts.

Now, people who take the 24-hour view tend to resist this and argue about that. And I'm not, I'm honestly, I'm not going to get into that because I don't think that's actually the strongest argument one way or another. But I've given you a couple examples that, you know, you can think through on your own. Second view. So some people, so that's first view, 24-hour view. Second view is what's called day-age view. So in the day-age view, we have six consecutive periods of time of indefinite length. So Genesis 1 is sort of showing us a picture of how life developed over time and showing us sort of those, some of the main stages. But we can't put a time, we can't put sort of a time frame on it from our modern or our experience. But it's still sort of, sort of showing us a general picture of how life on earth developed. Now, so now in one sense, many people would sort of agree with this at some level, because Genesis begins with God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void. There's sort of a progression of some kind, and human beings come last. Pretty much everybody agrees with that, right? You know, whether the earth is created in six 24-hour days or over millions of years, right? Human beings are, have come on the scene sort of at the end, the climactic moment. But if you take this view more particularly, and you say, well, okay, it's all consecutive in order, then you've still got a few issues. So how do plants and trees on the third day exist before the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day? Now, most people who take this view say, on the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars became visible. The cloud cover dissipated. But that's not actually what Genesis says. Genesis says God made them on the fourth day.

And the other caution I have about the day-age view is that many people who adopt this view say that Genesis 1 is sort of a, sort of like a hypothesis that we can test. And if we can confirm the hypothesis, then that's another reason to believe the Bible is true.

But again, I think it's very unlikely that the author of Genesis was trying to give us a hypothesis of how the earth developed over time that we could now test by modern scientific methods.

And again, with some of these issues, you know, plants and trees before the sun, moon, and stars, I think there are some problems we run into. And I think if we sort of read Genesis 1 as like, this is an outline of the natural history of life on earth, well, then what if the scientific conclusions don't seem to support that, right? Does that mean the Bible's false?

[21:56] So I think there are some issues here. The third view is what is usually called the framework view. In other words, the six days are a literary framework. So Genesis 1, in other words, Genesis 1 speaks about God's creation in a topical or thematic way, but not necessarily a chronological way.

So Genesis 1 describes God's work week, not our work week, would be one way of putting it. Some other people, a variation of this view is that God revealed the story of creation to Moses over six days, and the six days are sort of those six days. So there's a little variety within this view, but basically it's saying this chapter isn't meant as a play-by-play account, but it's more an orderly picture, sort of affirming God's purpose in making the world and overseeing it.

So I think some strong points of this view, this view highlights some of the patterns that are right there in Genesis 1, forming and filling rulers and realms. Pastor Matt pointed those out in his sermon on Genesis 1, if you were here for that a couple weeks ago, and you can make a nice chart. Day 1 corresponds to day 4, day 2 to day 5, day 3 to day 6. That's very orderly, and it sort of all seems to fit together under that forming and filling, setting up realms, and appointing rulers over them.

So in this view, God is telling us not so much how things develop, but who is in charge of what. Second point is the reference, let's see, the reference to the heavens and the earth makes it plausible that the days might be referring to heavenly time and not earthly time, and this would make sense of the fourth and seventh days. Third reason for this view, again this is from Genesis itself, so I'm not arguing for this based on a scientific theory. Third point is Genesis is set apart from the rest of the book as a prologue. I don't think it's quite right to call it a poem. It's not quite a poem. It's not exactly a psalm, but it's written in a more rhythmic way. In fact, if you read Genesis 1 out loud in a group and just have one person read each day, you can sort of hear that. There's a majesty to the chapter, whereas if you read the rest of Genesis, it's great, it's a narrative, but particularly in Genesis 1, you have this rhythm, the first day, the second day, the third day, and it all leads up to the climax of the sixth day, and God's saying it's very good, and then God rests, and sort of it's complete, and God joyfully delights in his work. So perhaps the structure of Genesis indicates that Genesis 1 should be interpreted in something like this way, but there are objections to this view. I think two of the main objections to this view is, one, this view is mostly motivated by a desire to accommodate Genesis to evolutionary theory, and not by anything in the biblical text itself. So many people will say this.

My first response would be these three strong points that I have pointed out that I think that are all connected to the biblical text and not dependent on any scientific theory.

[25 : 19] My second response to this would be many Jews and Christians in pre-modern times held to a 24-hour view, but others, including the early church fathers, Augustine and Origen, medieval rabbis, Rashi and Maimonides, as well as Philo, a Jewish scholar who was before or around the time of Christ, all those people interpreted the days figuratively or allegorically. They saw things like the sun, moon, and stars don't appear until the fourth day. They discussed that, right? They didn't have scientific theories back. I mean, there were scientific theories, though most of us wouldn't accept most of the scientific theories that were around in those days, but they looked at the text and they said, you know, there's probably something more going on here. This isn't necessarily teaching the sort of 24-hour consecutive view. So this isn't only a modern view. Second objection is, if you don't hold to the literal meaning of Genesis, in other words, a 24-hour view, you will go down a slippery slope and deny every other core Christian doctrine, and you will end up denying miracles and the resurrection of Jesus and the atoning work of Christ and everything else that's at the heart of

Christianity. Now, you could certainly find examples of people who have gone down that road, but my response to this would be, it depends on the reasons for your interpretation of Genesis.

So if you have biblical reasons for interpreting Genesis according to the framework view, then you are not going to be inclined to deny other biblical doctrines. Now, if you just say, well, I'm just ready to throw out the Bible, the minute I find something else that seems to disagree with it, well, then I'm fine. You'll find other things in the world that seem to disagree with the Bible and that we have to work through, right? That's part of the challenge, is we're all going to face questions, we're all going to face doubts, we're all going to face issues, and if you just immediately pitch the Bible the minute you are dealing with any of those things, then yes, you're prone to going down a slippery slope. But I don't think it's a fair, slippery slope arguments are slippery, right?

There's some truth to them, but it's also something that's not quite fair to just throw at anybody who interprets a certain part of the Bible a little differently than you do. So you have to sort of say, well, why are you interpreting it this way? You know, what are the reasons for your different interpretation? And again, I would say if you have good reasons from within the Bible text, then that's not, you're probably not going to be inclined to go down that way. So you may be able to tell by this point, I am personally inclined to the framework view. However, I also want to be clear that the church, Trinity Baptist Church, does not have an official position on this matter. You are free to hold to any of these three views, or other views that are substantiated from Scripture. And the most important thing that we believe as the elders is that Christians can be united by the main point of Genesis 1, which is exactly what we've been preaching in the sermons about God is the maker and sustainer of all that exists. He's a sovereign and good king. And we human beings are made in his image. So there's, so that's the days of Genesis 1. Now let's go on to a few other questions where we believe that we, as I'm speaking sort of for the pastors or elders of Trinity, where we believe that faithful Christians can hold a range of views. Doesn't mean that faithful Christians can hold any view that's out there, but we think there's a range of reasonable views that can be held.

Okay, so one question, how old is the earth? This is mostly an implication of what we've just discussed. So does, here's the question is, does Genesis indicate whether the earth is relatively young, say a few thousand years old, or whether the earth is older than that? Also, does it indicate an approximate time frame when Adam and Eve might have lived? Now there's basically two, so statement, so if you, so in order to say that Genesis indicates something one way or the other about this question, you have to rely on two things, or you have to assume two things. One is, one, if you are trying to say that Genesis argues for a certain age of the earth, then you basically have to say it's talking about 24-hour days. Because if you take the day-age view, if you take the framework view, then that leaves the question open. Doesn't say the earth has to be old, doesn't say the earth has to be young, both those, those second and third views leave that question open. View one, the 24-hour view, if you take that view, that would seem to lead you down a young earth view.

[30:12] But the second thing is the genealogies. So pretty much everybody agrees, Abraham's around 2000 BC. That's Genesis 12. And there are two genealogies in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 that go from Adam to Noah, and then from Noah to Abraham. And those genealogies tell about the ages of, there's 10 men in each genealog, 10 individuals in each genealogy, and they, each of the genealogies describes their age at death. So some people have added up the ages in those genealogies and those 10 generations and said, aha, we can find when Adam lived. And if you just add them up without adding, you know, if you assume there's no gaps, then you get about 4000 BC. The caution I would say here is that the genealogies in Genesis and throughout the rest of scripture are not necessarily complete in the sense of being exhaustive. They're more often representative. So the word father, translated father, can also mean ancestor. So when it says, you know, Adam was the father of Seth, that now in this case, that seems, you know, it talks about Eve giving birth to Seth. So that seems, that seems to be the literal meaning there. But in many other cases, father can mean ancestor, right? Or even the beginning of Matthew says, Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, right? Now, obviously,

Jesus isn't the physical son of David and Abraham. No, he's the descendant, right? So when it talks about sons and fathers, it's not only talking about the literal father and son that we think of. It's talking more broadly about an ancestor and a descendant. So genealogies regularly intended as summaries using round numbers. That's why genealogies are often in groups of seven or 10 or 14.

And they often skip generations when we compare them with one another or other accounts. So Matthew chapter one, for just one example, skips three generations between King Joram and King Uzziah, when it's talking about from David to the exile. So I think we should be careful, sort of hold that with at least somewhat of an open hand about sort of calculating back to Adam and recognize that those are the two assumptions that are behind the claim that Genesis teaches that the world is blank number of years old. Okay, so that's the age of the earth. Next question. Could God have used an evolutionary process to guide the development of life on earth? Or did he create every species individually?

Now, some people point to the phrase, God made them according to their kinds, which appears throughout Genesis one as an indication that God created each species or group of species distinctly and separately. There's usually some discussion about what is a kind? Is it a species? Is it a genus?

Is it a family? Is it a whatever, right? How does that relate to our modern system of scientific classification? Now, other people point to another phrase, they say, well, you know, notice in the parts about the animals and the plants, God says, let the earth bring forth in the Genesis one account.

[33 : 33] So maybe that seems to be more open to some kind of evolutionary process is developing naturally through secondary means, God's still overseeing it. Again, I think in both of these cases, we might be reading more into Genesis from our own questions than the author of Genesis was intending to say.

So personally, I'm not convinced that either of these arguments actually gives you a strong conclusion one way or the other. Just because I don't think the author of Genesis was actually consciously attempting to make either of those points. Now, I think if we step back from Genesis one and sort of look at the Bible as a whole, I think that we see examples throughout the Bible where God intervenes directly and miraculously. And there's also other examples in the Bible where God works over a longer period of time through secondary means. And still, in both cases, God is accomplishing his purpose and carrying out, carrying that out intentionally and with great care.

So just two examples, book of Exodus, God delivers his people from slavery in Egypt. There's a lot of miracles there, right? There's a lot of divine intervention and prophetic words and 10 plagues and crossing the Red Sea and manna in the desert, all kinds of things that are, you know, they're claimed to be miraculous, right? That's pretty clear. You can't explain Exodus just sort of as natural things that happen on their own, where they happen apart from God's direct intervention. But then if you look at Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, God is also delivering his people. In that case, he's bringing them back from exile or in Esther, he's sustaining them who are still in exile in Persia. But there are no miracles in these books. There's no sort of, now there is God's providence working through people.

You know, if you look at the book of Esther, I mean, Esther is the best example of this because Esther doesn't even mention God directly. And yet the whole book of Esther is full of God's providence, full of him working behind the scenes, working through Esther, working through Mordecai, you know, bringing judgment on Haman. And sort of in the end, God rescues his people from being on the verge of annihilation. And God does it without sort of acting directly and obviously, but he's still very clearly behind it. So I think that in principle, Christians can rejoice in God working in both ways.

And we should be open to God working in both ways, miraculously and directly, or providentially and patiently. Now, if, if you accept that principle, and if you apply it to the origin and development of life, I think that you that Christian biologists who are researching the history of life on earth are in principle, free to conclude that God worked directly and miraculously, or indirectly and through natural means, or in both ways at different times. Now, of course, many times we might say, we can't be completely confident, but we might, you know, have an inkling one way or another. I think Christian biologists would have that freedom to conclude anywhere along that spectrum. Now, on one note, is secular biologists do not have that option. Because if you are a biologist and you do not believe in God, or you do not believe in the possibility of God intervening in the world, then by definition, you must find a natural explanation for every single thing that has happened in the history of life on earth. And so, you know, I, that is, and that is not a scientific conclusion. That's a philosophical presupposition. That's an assumption that you, that is going to affect how you interpret the science. But I think actually Christians have, have freedom to either say, here's a way that God might've accomplished this through secondary means, or to say, we can't really see any way that secondary means can explain this. This seems to be like a radical leap. And as a

[38:03] Christian, maybe that, you know, perhaps God was doing that directly, or perhaps we'll find some secondary explanation through secondary means later on. And then we can say that God accomplished that through secondary means, or, you know, and, and we're going to be humble about that because there's a limit to how confident we can be in those conclusions in general. So I think Christians should actually, Christian biologists actually have a freedom and, and don't necessarily have to feel the same pressure, uh, to land on one side or the other. Uh, okay. One other relevant question is a bit of a digression, but it affects this issue. Could God have developed things through evolutionary processes is this, does the Bible allow for the possibility of animals and plants to die before the fall? Um, and many people have assumed, no, they think before the fall, the world was perfect and nothing died. Well, the Bible never quite says that. Now Romans five does say sin entered the world through one man and death through sin. And in this way, death came to all people. So, um, human beings would not have been destined to die apart from sin. That's the whole thing about tree of life, right? By continually eating of the tree of life, God would have sustained them and, and kept them.

In the garden, right? Uh, but the Bible doesn't say that about animals. And in fact, Psalm 104, which celebrates God's wisdom displayed in his creation, it also celebrates lions that roar for their prey and seek their food from God. Um, and it doesn't seem to be describing that as a, uh, as an effect of the fall. So, um, so I, I, I think we should not say that, uh, I think we should not say there was no animal death before the fall. Um, cause I don't think the Bible tells us that.

I think at the very least we need to leave that question open. Okay. Um, most, here comes the most difficult question. What about human origins? Uh, this is the thorniest question cause it has the most significant implications, right? How does Genesis fit with modern theories about human origins? You go to the PBD museum, uh, you go to that exhibit on the first floor, it's there all the time, right?

Apes, uh, gradually develop into modern humans or through a, there's, sorry, it's not apes into humans. It's a common ancestor who develops branches off one way or the other, right? So what do we think about that? Okay. So let's start with what the Bible says most clearly and repeatedly. Number one, human beings bear the image of God and we're different from all other creatures in that respect. Second, uh, the human race is a unity and is represented by Adam. Um, and, uh, there are important implications of both of these statements. Okay. So scripture does not support the idea of human beings emerging purely gradually from other life forms. Um, because there's no such thing as a creature that half bears the image of God. And, and, you know, if you think that there could be creature, that there could be creatures who sort of look like they're human, but aren't actually human, ooh, there is a dangerous road you can go down. And people have gone down that dangerous road in the past when you want to say that one race is not really fully bearing the image of God. So there are some very dangerous implications, uh, if, uh, if you, if you do not accept a biblical view of human beings as distinctly bearing the image of God. Um, second, the unity of the human race represented by Adam, um, Romans 5, sin entered the world through one man. First Corinthians 15, death came through one man.

So Paul refers to Adam and Eve as real persons whose disobedience had real and tragic consequences. And this also makes sense of many of our human intuitions, right? You go to a funeral, uh, uh, for someone that you loved and you, or, you know, right, you have the death of a loved one and you think this is not the way the world was supposed to be. There's something wrong about this that we're wrenched apart from one another. Um, and we sort of have this longing for something that we don't experience in this world, right? We have a sense that things are not quite the way they were just supposed to be. Um, even the sense of longing to regain something that we lost long ago. And you know, that, that feeling makes a lot of sense within the biblical story that God made, uh, uh, uh, the, the made made a good world and appointed human beings to reign over it. Um, and yet, uh, through our disobedience, we have lost, uh, what we once had the relationship with God that we once had.

[43 : 10] So those are, I think, important points to hold. Now the traditional view and the most straightforward view is Adam and Eve were specially created by God and that they are the biological ancestors of the entire human race. On this view, we can acknowledge genetic and physical similarities between humans and apes as well as other animals. Uh, however, these similarities are due to common design, not common ancestry. Uh, so that's sort of the most straightforward view. Um, however, some Christians who accept, uh, theistic evolution or evolutionary creation have supposed, proposed somewhat more complicated views. Uh, in, in general, these views attempt to reconcile biblical statements about the uniqueness of human beings with the views of biologists who propose that human beings share a common ancestor with apes or the views of geneticists who say that modern humans are not all descended from, uh, two ancestors. So look at the chart on the next page. I've sort of summarized these, uh, sort of three main views, uh, young earth creationism, um, and, uh, uh, connected with the 24 hour view, old earth creationism. This is often connected with the day age view, uh, although it could be connected with the framework view, um, and then theistic evolution. And, uh, what I particularly want to deal with, with here is that, um, within the, the theistic evolution camp, there are a wide range of views about Adam and Eve. Okay. They, people are not all of one mind about this. So there are some views that sound more traditional, um, and, uh, include a clear sort of historical Adam, right? Uh, an individual at a specific point in history. Um, so view one would be Adam as, uh, a developed hominid, right? Whose body had developed over time, but God breathed at a specific point, breathed life into him.

He became the first image bearer of God and he became the ancestor of the rest of us. Uh, a second view is that, uh, is, is, is, is Adam. Um, but sort of, this gets a little more complicated. He's seen as a divinely set apart representative head or chief of a tribe of existing hominids who, uh, the image of God, uh, was given to them, uh, sort of first to Adam and then through him to, to them. And, uh, but then there are other views that are, how shall I say looser many different Adams and Eves who received some divine revelation, but disobeyed it. Some people even just say Adam and Eve were literary figures and not historical individuals. It's not clear exactly what that means for, um, how humans developed. So what do we make of these views? Okay. Again, I think this is the most, um, the thorniest area. So let me speak first to those of us who hold more traditional views about Adam and Eve and who think, well, we think it's pretty clear Adam and Eve were specially created by God and they're the ancestors of the rest of us. Um, so I think we should recognize that many of the people who affirm some of these more complicated views are in other respects Bible believing Christians.

Uh, Francis Collins and Dennis Alexander, um, they speak on university campuses and they talk about their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Um, so they're certainly not sort of gradually trying to deny, uh, all biblical doctrines. Uh, there's other, uh, I've listed some, uh, Bible commentators and theologians, Derek Kidner, Don, John Walton, John Stott, N.T. Wright have expressed some openness to views one or two. Uh, note that these views do affirm a historical Adam and Eve in some form.

So it's not fair or charitable to dismiss all theistic evolutionists as heretics. Um, even if we may express concern about the downstream theological consequences of some of these views. Now, on the other hand, let me speak to those of us who may be inclined toward theistic evolution or at least toward some aspects of it. Uh, I think we should be cautious about immediately embracing these somewhat novel views, especially views three and four, which do not affirm historical Adam. Uh, many theistic evolutionists. So some theistic evolutionists are pretty committed to the authority of the Bible.

And you can see that in the way they treat the rest of the Bible. Um, but many theistic evolutionists are not. So the camp is very broad. Um, and I think you can find some who are, uh, too quickly ready to dispense with not only the idea of, uh, Adam and Eve as real persons, whose actions had real consequences, but other important biblical teachings as well.

[47 : 46] So we should not ignore or dismiss the conclusions of biologists and geneticists. And again, I am neither, so I'm not really qualified to evaluate these claims, um, but we should be even more wary of dismissing what scripture repeatedly affirms, especially when such concepts play an important role in the larger story of redemption. Um, so that's what I would say. Uh, now as the time frame of when Adam and Eve might've existed and how this relates to the fossil record, um, there are a wide range of views among theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists. Uh, I think Henry Blocher, he's a French theologian, uh, who wrote, uh, good, uh, some, uh, a book called in the beginning about the opening chapters of Genesis. Uh, and he made this point, which I think is a good point.

He said, it is difficult to forecast what aspect of being made in the image of God would actually show up in a scientific description of mankind. So it's not quite certain what it is we're looking for when we try to discover the first man largely in terms of incomplete skeletons, right?

Same could be applied, uh, as we, uh, in terms of discovering the first, uh, people in terms of their genetic material, right? Um, so again, this is an area where science and the Bible are dealing with questions that overlap, but being made in the image of God is not exactly the same thing as having an opposable thumb or walking on two feet. Um, so again, this is something where I think we, it is wise to have some humility in the conclusions that we hold. Um, and that's where I want to end, uh, with, uh, Henry Blocher's words. Uh, he wrote, we, uh, as he, he sort of has a longer discussion about, um, uh, uh, Genesis and evolution in general, and then Adam and Eve in particular. So he says, we end on an inconclusive note. Uh, so he's particularly referring to like when Adam and Eve might've existed. Uh, we end on an inconclusive note, which in certain respects illustrates the attitude of faith for faith does not have all the answers straight away, nor does it claim that contemporary science gives it complete support. If certain factors in today's scientific picture appear contrary to the word of God, faith is not shaken. It has such confidence in that word that it can be quite open about its hesitations and wait patiently for the clouds to clear.

Um, if you're interested, I have a pile of books on this topic and I'm happy to loan those out, uh, if you would like. Um, sorry, I went late. So, uh, I'll, I can take like one or two questions.

Um, and, uh, then we got to end Gary. Who was the author of Genesis? Who was the author of Genesis? Uh, I think Moses was the primary author of Genesis. That's another long topic for another day, but that's short answer. Moses. Peter.

[50:33] Um, really, really good summary. I mean, just thank you. Um, I, to this point of the historical particularity of Genesis, I think it's really important to hold. Um, and one of the things about, uh, Adam in particular is that scripture gives him an age, you know? And so, I think internet, so you can talk all you want about how, you know, whether the days of Genesis one or whatever, but when scripture assigns an age to someone, it seems to me like strong evidence textually that that person, there's a specific person in mind and they lived that long. Um, the only other way around that I guess would be to try to find an example in scripture where, you know, someone, you know, where an age, it was given to someone and that age is sort of symbolic. Is there precedent for that scripturally or not? I guess it's not. Do you know?

Yeah, I don't think we have any other figures who are given symbolic ages. So there is, there's some discussion about, so the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis are, you know, 900, 800, 700 years. So some people have wondered, are those numbers, uh, meant literally, or are those numbers meant symbolically? But nobody has quite been able to find a coherent way of understanding them symbolically. Um, and so, 965.

965, right, right. Um, you know, they're not like the numbers in Revelation, which are all multiples of 7 or 1,000, you know, or 10 or whatever, right? Um, so, so they're, they're not sort of obviously symbolic numbers. So yes, I think that is one more piece of evidence from Genesis itself that Adam is seen as a real person. And yeah, I do think there's a distinction between Genesis 1 and how that's written more as prologue, and then sort of the rest of Genesis is written as a narrative, right? And, um, so, so I think, yes, I think you're making a good point there. All right. Um, so we will come back next week and Danielle will, uh, lead us, uh, from her perspective as a physicist. Um, and I'm happy to talk with anybody more if you have questions or concerns. Thanks.