

What about Genesis?

Trust Issues



The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon notes
of his message, preached February 4th, 2018

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✚ We are in a series of messages called: **Trust Issues**

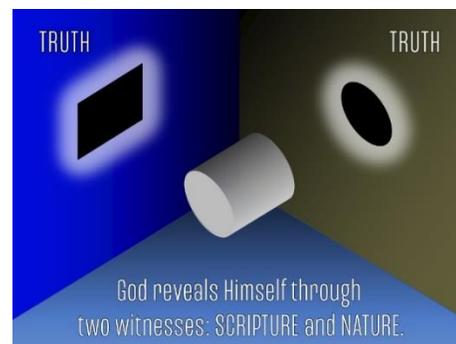
Last week we looked at the question: **“Is faith and science compatible?”** And the answer was a resounding **YES!**

To the Christian faith, good science and good theology are friends. The Christian Church has long believed that God reveals Himself through two witnesses: SCRIPTURE and NATURE.

Just like this cube, seen from one angle it's a square, seen from another angle it's a circle. Both realities are true!

- Science does not reveal to us things like God's plan of redemption, justification by faith or the Godhead and how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one.

But **science can reveal to us His omnipotence, His infinite wisdom**, it can help us affirm the validity of ancient Biblical documents through the sciences of **Diplomatics, Archaeology and Textual Criticism.**



“For since the creation of the world, God's invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” Romans 1:2

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.” Psalm 19:1–2 (NKJV)

The voice of the Lord is speaking to us through the wonders of His creation, He reveals Himself as science explores the planets and the galaxies, as we look at the vastness of the universe

through the telescope and at the smallest details through the microscope, He reveals His greatness through the wonderful advancements of medicine, botany (the study of plants), we see His fingerprint in biology and chemistry, He whispers to us as we marvel at nature's wonders and look at the milky way.

“The heavens declare the glory of God.” “Day unto day He utters His speech, and night unto night He reveals His knowledge to us.”

✚ **So, what about Genesis?** **Is Genesis at odds with science?**

One of the first mistakes that people make when examining Genesis 1 and 2 is looking at it as a science book...

Genesis is not a science book, it's not a medical journal, it's not a biology class, it's not an astronomy lesson explaining how the Earth rotates around the Sun...

1. **Genesis is a Theological Narrative!**

This is the first key to understanding this beautiful and amazing book!

In the same way as we don't expect Science to answer all the Theological questions, we must not expect the Bible to reveal to us those things that only Science can reveal.

This beautiful piece of Bible literature called Genesis is there to introduce us to the God, and to start a conversation with us about who God is and His wonderful redemptive plan of Salvation for humanity. **It starts this way:**

“In the beginning God Elohim”

It all starts with Elohim – He is the beginning; He starts it all!

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters. Then Elohim said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And Elohim saw the light, that it was good; and Elohim divided the light from the darkness. Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. Then Elohim said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Thus Elohim made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And Elohim called the firmament heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.” Genesis 1:1–8

“Then Elohim saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31

“These are the generations of heaven and earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh Elohim made earth and heaven.” Genesis 2:4

So it starts with Elohim and then it quickly moves to this very unique Hebrew name for God: Yahweh – the I AM (A progressive revelation about God) Years later Jesus says:

“Before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:58 (NKJV)

No wonder the Pharisees wanted to kill him for blaspheming, they knew what He meant! The power of that statement is birthed in Genesis.

2. Genesis is God’s revelation to Israel and through them to us

When I open my Bible in the mornings I seek something fresh for me. I want God to speak to me about my present, about the things I will face today, about my current issues. **That’s fantastic!** (and He does speak through the Bible to my day)

But, when I open my Bible, I also must not forget that Genesis wasn’t written in English. It wasn’t written in today’s modern society’s context, it wasn’t written in today’s culture. In fact, Genesis wasn’t written to us! **It was written to Israel!**

Genesis was written thousands of years ago in a language that most of us do not understand, therefore it requires translation. But that’s not all, it was written to a people who lived in a very different context than we do and with a very different culture than we have. **The language used in Genesis would have been understood in their culture very differently than how our culture understands it.** Therefore, when we read Genesis we must take those factors into consideration.

Genesis is God's revelation to Israel and eventually, through them, it becomes God's revelation to us. But **FIRST** God had to communicate it **to them**, as they were leaving Egypt in the Sinai Peninsula, in their culture and language, using terms they understood.

Example: Last summer I was at the lake and there was this beautiful day, the sky was clear and so blue. I took my boat to the middle of the lake and watched the Sunset. The red sky was spectacular! Then as it got dark we made a fire and the light of the moon was so brilliant. Then the stars came out and I could see Jupiter and Saturn. It was so peaceful!

Can you understand what I'm saying? **Sure you can**, you can almost feel yourself there!

But from a scientific point of view all that is incorrect!

- There is no such thing as a blue sky. The sky has no colour! As the light from the sun passes through the atmosphere, it creates a prism effect and we see the blue rays which are shorter. But later as we get farther from the sun we see the red rays.
- The sun does not set. We move and rotate away from the sun.
- The moon has no light. It's the reflection of the very same light from the sun we saw before.
- The stars did not come out. They were always there. We see them when it gets dark enough. And Saturn and Jupiter are not there. By the time the light traveled from the sun to them and back to me they have moved farther ahead in their orbit.
- And those stars, the light of those stars left thousands of years ago and they are not close to being there, some might not even exist.

Is my story of the beautiful day and sunset untrue? Incorrect? No, not really. I was using language we use to describe what we see and experience. Science is using a different approach to understand my day.

In the same way, Genesis was communicating to Israel the simple truth that He created everything. That He took disorder and put in place order, time, seasons and functions, laws that would keep this creation working with precision. Without having to go into the scientific details that they would not have understood.

Example: What is this image of? Of course, you know it's of planet earth. You can see India, North-East Africa, the Middle East, Asia, etc. But if you could put an Israelite (at the time when Genesis was given) into a time machine to today and show her or him this image they would not know this was earth. To them this was what earth was like... They did not know the world was round, they did not know about America.

They did not know there was an Atlantic and a Pacific Ocean, in fact **they understood the world as flat**. They did not know about the orbit of planets, that the moon orbits the earth and the earth orbits the sun... And at the time, God did not bother to explain to them the difference...



That wasn't the time or the purpose of Genesis. The purpose of the book was to establish a "starting point (an introduction) to who God really is."

It establishes the distinction between God as the creator and the created. Separating YHWH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from the gods of the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians (who believed that the sun, the moon, air, earth, were gods). No, Genesis tells us Elohim made those things. Genesis draws a line between the God of the Bible and paganism, pantheist, idolatry, polytheism, animism and materialism.

Genesis starts to lay the ground work for the understanding that while God is one He also has a plurality of essence.

"Let Us make humans in Our image."

...would later be revealed in the New Testament to be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God creating the world together. **Genesis introduces the Holy Spirit saying:**

"The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Genesis 1:2

This word "hovering" is a very interesting Hebrew word: It means to flutter over like a mother bird does over her chicks... The Holy Spirit breaths on the first humans and they come alive, comes on the prophets and they prophecy, over Mary and Jesus is born, descends at Jesus' baptism like a dove, and descends on the day of Pentecost and empowers the Church!

But the revelation starts in Genesis. Genesis starts the conversation about the spiritual battle against Satan, temptation and the fall of man, the shame that sin brings and how it separates us from God. But **God covers their shame** paving the way to the later understanding of God's Grace, His redemptive plan of Salvation in Christ, the cross for our forgiveness of sins. **The idea of the Sacrament of Communion starts in Genesis.** Genesis plants the seeds that become the critical foundation of our New Testament Christian faith.

It's like reading a mystery novel, when you get to the end then you can go back to chapter one and understand it better.

3. But Genesis is also God's revelation to Israel as to who they were and where they came from.

- They had been **slaves in Egypt for 400 years.**
- Emerged in an Egyptian culture, surrounded by Egypt's religion and Egypt's deities or gods. (400 years – almost three times the age of Canada) 400 years immersed in that culture!
- **400 hundred years as slaves!** Beaten down for over 12 generations
Can you imagine what that would do to you? To your thinking!
- **So God has to tell them who they are.** He tells them:
 - You are created by God. I breathed in you the breath of life.
 - I formed you myself. You matter!
 - I had a relationship with you, but your parents sinned and walked away from me.
Come back to me!

- I called your father Abraham and blessed him. Though his seed, through you, I will bless the world.
- You are a chosen people! I am the Lord your God and you are my people. You are not slaves to Pharaoh.

Illustration: A little girl called Rita came running to her and asked, "Mom, where did I come from?" Her mom gulped in shock and, after gaining her composure, decided it was time her daughter knew about "the birds and the bees". So, she carefully told little Rita all about love and sex resulting in the beginning of life, how life developed in the womb and finally how a child was born. As she explained it all, trying to be as calm as possible, her daughters' eyes got bigger and bigger. When she finished, little Rita said "**Wow!** That sure beats what dad told me. He said that we came from Pennsylvania."

In Genesis God is not giving Israel the details ("the birds and the bees" of creation) of where they came from... He's telling them they came from God, and Adam, and Abraham. They are part of a free family!

God gives them meaning, value, hope and a future outside of slavery.

They belong to a chosen generation.

Later, as Rita goes to school and university she will study in greater detail what the science of Embryology has discovered on how a woman's egg is fertilized by the male sperm, and the wonder of how a baby develops in the mother's uterus.

But Rita will still be from Pennsylvania, she will know that she belongs to a family and that she has a dad and a mom that love her.

+ **Genesis introduces the story of God's love for humanity to Israel.** And through Israel comes Christ... the Savior that brings us all out of our slavery and gives us value, he covers our shame, we are His chosen children in Jesus Christ, and we have the hope of eternal life. We are His, we belong to a chosen family

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

In Jesus you matter! You matter!

+ **Jesus said that He...**

"Came to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10"

Genesis starts the story of a people that lose their way. **The story of God finding lost humanity.** He comes in person to seek us and to bring us back to where we belong!

WHY?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16 (NKJV)

Recommended reading/Video:

By Tim Keller

- Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical
- The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism (NOTE: This one is a bit heavier reading)
- YouTube “The Song of Creation”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIRGMCnimgo>

By John Walton

- The Lost World of Genesis One
- YouTube “Genesis through Ancient Eyes”: <https://youtu.be/fR82a-iueWw>