

Achieving a Coherent Picture of Genesis 1

that Leaves No Pieces of the Puzzle Out

A Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) Q & A Column has stated that “*Unless there is compelling reason on the basis of the biblical texts themselves...we are to believe God created the world in six 24-hour days*” (boldface mine).¹ In reply to that dare, I have written both of my extended essays: “*The Biblical Demand to take Another Look: Ten Compelling exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non 24-Hour*” and “*Defusing the Alleged Conflict Between Scientific Fact and the Text of Genesis 1 Without Compromising Either One,*” as well as my briefer study, “*How Genesis 1:1 Easily Accommodates the Big Bang.*”² As an LCMS Pastor I take no issue with our position that the first chapter of Genesis is the inerrant and revealed Word of God. My objection instead lies in the refusal of our leadership to make good on the gauntlet they have laid down by giving a serious hearing to those who claim to answer their challenge faithfully.³ Furthermore, it must be also be noted that legitimate biblical interpretation entails two additional aspects, each of which must triangulate with the other.

While proper exegesis is clearly a *necessary* aspect of biblical interpretation, it is not a *sufficient* factor in elucidating the first chapter of Genesis. For the very reason that this passage addresses the physical phenomena of nature we encounter with the purpose of accounting for both its existence and beginning (Gen. 1:1), it should be expected that it will in *some way*⁴ harmonize with the array of things it describes (Psalm 19:1-2). It is true that certain Christians protest any expectation for reconciliation on the grounds that, since Genesis 1 is the Word of God, it follows for them that this passage is the final authority on every matter it addresses, including *scientific* observations. Nevertheless, this objection can’t withstand biblical scrutiny for the reason that it contradicts the Apostle Paul’s announcement in Rom. 1:18-20 that the testimony of nature (“*the things that have been made*”) must NOT be suppressed. Indeed, he states that nature is the very vehicle through which God’s “*eternal power and deity*” is made plain to all people. Christians consequently have no permission to ignore scientific data in reference to geological processes or the age of creation in order to maintain their pet interpretation of Genesis 1.

Entirely consistent with the previous point, interpreters of Gen. 1 must thirdly heed the abstract principle of rationality. One *first-principle* in logic is identified as the *law of non-contradiction*, which states that in order for an assertion concerning a set of phenomena to be true, it must correspond to the actual facts of the case.⁵ On this principle it is illogical for people to insist the Bible teaches the sun and moon were created on Day 4, when scientific facts to the contrary utterly refute that notion. Even the biblical texts teaches otherwise.⁶ Indeed Jesus affirmed this same principle with respect to both natural phenomena (John 3:12) and public events entailing the miracles and healings He performed broadly (Mark 2:1-12, Luke 9:10f, John ch. 9 and John 14:11b). I further address the role that apologetics plays all across the Bible in three other essays.⁷ Indeed insofar as we limit our interpretational criteria to only one of the above three aspects, we are failing to read Scripture Scripturally!

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¹www.lcms.hughes-stl.com/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2210.

² Access these documents at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com

³ “*The Biblical Demand,*” Ibid. As of the writing of that essay, the circumstances I here describe have not improved.

⁴ I am not arguing that the Bible conveys truth in *scientific* terms, but in *non-scientific terms*. See, “*Defusing the Alleged Conflict.*” Op.cit. (2).

⁵ See my paper, “*Truth is Never Less than One,*” Op.cit. (2).

⁶ See my paper, “*How Genesis 1:1 Easily Accommodates the Big Bang,*” Op.cit. (2).

⁷ See my papers, “*How Did the Early Church Grow?*” ** “*The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics...in the Bible,*” ** “*Hoax? Myth? Or Literally True?*” Op.cit. (2).

