



"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

SEPTEMBER 2009

What's Happening?

Hugh Ross October Visit

Hugh Ross will visit the Seattle area Oct. 18-21. Here are the events that are scheduled:

- Sun., Oct. 18, 6 PM, "Why the Universe is the Way It Is"—Harbor Covenant Church, 5601 Gustafson Dr. NW, Gig Harbor
- Mon., Oct. 19, 7 PM, "Can God and Science be Reconciled?"—His Place Church, 1480 S. Burlington Blvd., Burlington
- Tues., Oct. 20, 7 PM, "Can God & Science be Reconciled," Christ's Church, 941 S. Dash Point Rd., Federal Way
- Wed., Oct. 21, 7 PM, "Why the Universe is the Way It Is"—Mars Hill Church, Downtown Seattle Campus, 2333 Western Ave., Seattle

For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org.

We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us.

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Examining the Perfect Creation - Part 2

RICK BARTH

[Note: Part 1 of this article appeared in the August chapter newsletter.]

NO CARNIVORES

Answers in Genesis:

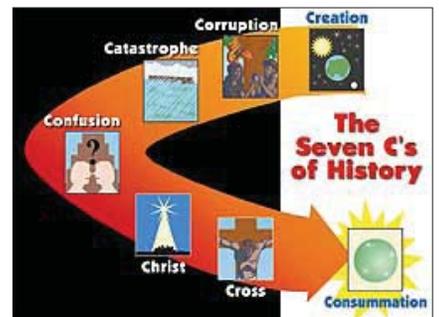
The animals, which Adam ruled over, got along perfectly.

This is not explicitly stated in Scripture, although there are verses that seem to suggest the animals may have had predominately vegetarian diets (e.g., Gen. 1:29; 9:2-4).

Other support for this argument comes from references to a time after God's final judgment when "the wolf will then lie down with the lamb." This could be literal or figurative, as much of the language in such areas of Scripture is figurative representing that the things of old will no longer be. For example, animosity and vice will be gone. Hallelujah!

A closer look at Scripture shows that there is no indication that the wolf and lamb at one time in the past did lie down together. In Isaiah 11:5-7, the statement the wolf will lie down with the lamb is followed by the statement "the lion will eat straw like the ox." It does not say "once again" or "just as before sin entered the world." In fact, nowhere in scripture is there an indication that the pre-fall conditions are what resemble the final reward for obedience.

There is no reference in Scripture to animal death or carnivorous activity as being a result of the curse or as a punishment for sin. Nor is there a declaration in Scripture to not eat meat like there was the declaration to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Rather, what we see is Adam is given authority to "rule over the fish of the sea" (1:28). What could he possibly do with fish of the sea other than use them as a source for food? Before any command is given concerning eating or not eating meat, Able is offering sacrifices and Noah offers a sacrifice before the covenant with Noah where eating animals is noted (4:1-5; 8:20). Sacrifices were typically at least partially eaten.¹¹ And, God is frequently praised in scripture for caring



for the carnivores (e.g., Psalm 104:21 and Job 38:39-41), but nowhere is there lament for the supposed curse of carnivorous activity.

Philosophically, again, this also seems to be a quandary for a humanly perfect creation. If we believe God is sovereign, then He sets the rights and wrongs of creation. If, hypothetically, God's system of creation includes spiritless creatures killing and eating each other for sustenance, then who are we to say that is wrong, cruel or otherwise? If there are portions of scripture that praise God for how that very system works, as in the scriptures mentioned above, then why do we assume it is a bad thing? All of God's works are "good" (1 Tim 4:4). Therefore, if God could, by a matter of His desire have such a world that includes carnivorous activity, then we should not be offended by the idea that it may have existed prior to our sin, especially since there is no scripture declaring carnivores to be some result of the fall.

As Jonathan Edwards accurately notes, only humans are "capable of actively complying with his design in their creation, and promoting it; while other creatures cannot promote the design of their creation, only passively and eventually."¹² It is incorrect to assume that because one animal may eat of another that there is some moral aspect to that specific act. It may be an image of death as a reminder of our fragility, but animals are not subject to moral judgment. Animals are not capable of consciously following the Ten Commandments.

As a result, it seems questionable to go so far as to say there was no meat eating of any kind, and certainly it is a stretch of the text to say there were no carnivores. The Bible is simply not that specific on the topic but gives ample inference that God has no association of carnivorous activity of spiritless animals with the fall of spirit-filled humanity.

NO SICKNESS OR DEATH

Answers in Genesis:

...turning it into the world we see today, which is full of sickness and death.

This viewpoint comes from the young earth perspective that there is nothing bad, cruel, or unjust that happened prior to man's fall. It is derived from the assumption that God's declaration of "very good" means something we as humans may like it to mean...absolute perfection for human existence. However we see in John 9 that sin is not always the direct culprit for sickness. Jesus and the disciples come across a blind man. When the disciples ask if the man was born blind because of His sin or His parents' sin, Jesus responds "neither." It was so that the glory of God could be revealed, not as a direct punishment of the curse (John 9:3). Jesus separates this man's sickness from the disciplining effects of sin, either individual sin or inherited sin nature.

Similarly, it is hard to see how the events Job went through can be described as punishment for sin. Nowhere is it proclaimed as such (by God). The majority of the writing of Job is His three friends trying to convince Him that His woes are due to some unrevealed sin, something God excoriates the group for suggesting. In fact, most translations state at the end of Job that His friends "offered Him comfort for the adversity (some translations say "calamity" or "evil") the Lord had brought him." In fact, it is noticeable in scripture that Job was *offered up* to the devil, not that the devil forced or asked for his way with Job.

We must not assume that everything bad that happens is because of sin. Such

In the NEWS...

[Your DNA Made You Do It](#)

This tothesource article discusses how modern materialists try to attribute sin to biological sources (DNA). According to the author, this type of reasoning confuses cause and effect. Go to: http://www.tothesource.org/9_2_2009/9_2_2009.htm.

[Thinking Critically – Logic 101](#)

In this ongoing series of RTB articles, Ken Samples helps readers develop critical thinking skills. In it he discusses laws of logic and rules of argumentation to help order our thinking. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/resources/news-archives>.

[Deepening Darwin's Dilemma](#)

This Discovery Institute articles by Jonathan Wells examines Darwin's dilemma, the absence of intermediate fossils prior to the Cambrian explosion. With the wealth of precambrian fossils now available, Wells contends the dilemma is greater than ever. Go to <http://discovery.org/a/12471>.

[Where Postmodernism Came From](#)

This Breakpoint article examines the historical emergence of postmodernism, why it is attractive to some Christians, and why Christian worldview and postmodern worldview cannot coexist. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/12485-ideas-have-histories>.

[The Big IDA](#)

This Salvo article examines the media hype around IDA, the supposed evolutionary link to humans, and how that hype was unwarranted. It also discusses other missing links that have been similarly touted as proof of Darwinism. Go to <http://www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvog9nicoll.php>.

thinking is erroneous because it promotes the idea that we determine God's actions or reactions by our obedience or failures. Job is proclaimed by God as "righteous" (Job 1:8). Job's family is killed as an act that happened to Job without any indication His family had done any specific wrongdoing (Job 1:18) and Job did "extra" sacrifices for His family "just in case" (Job 1:5). God Himself notes that Satan "incited Me against him...without cause [emphasis added]" (Job 2:3). Thus, the woes Job underwent were to glorify God, not as a punishment for sin.

In 1 Peter 6-7 we see that trials and testing may be conducted to determine "proof of your faith." God is establishing His right to test any of us to see how long we would hold to His majesty and grace. Would we be Job?

John Piper commented on this concept when He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in an article titled "Don't Waste Your Cancer":

It will not do to say that God only uses our cancer but does not design it. What God permits, He permits for a reason. And that reason is His design. If God foresees molecular developments becoming cancer, He can stop it or not. If He does not, He has a purpose. Since He is infinitely wise, it is right to call this purpose a design. Satan is real and causes many pleasures and pains. But He is not ultimate. So when He strikes Job with boils (Job 2:7), Job attributes it ultimately to God (2:10) and the inspired writer agrees: "They . . . comforted Him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him" (Job 42:11). If you don't believe your cancer is designed for you by God, you will waste it.¹³

If the idea of sickness or suffering before the fall bothers us, then does this idea bring us more comfort? That God would "design" cancer for us? What about the mandate for Hosea to marry a harlot? Or for Ezekiel to lie on his side and cook from animal waste for hundreds of days or worse, have God take his wife and instruct Ezekiel, this faithful prophet, to not even mourn openly about it? What about the anguish and embarrassment Joseph must have gone through thinking Mary had betrayed him? Even with the example of Job noted above, Job crediting the struggles he endured to God instead of the Devil is a slap of the evil one. The Devil yearns to be God and he cannot even get credit for bringing pain to a righteous man. From a perspective of the ultimate sovereignty of God and perfection being in the purpose rather than the creation, the idea of sickness and pain is not a problem.

Paul writes we are to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18). Christ in the Beatitudes repeatedly indicates that "blessed are" the persecuted, the meek, etc. Would those not be presented as curses if they were actually part of the curse itself? But, if they are part of the original creation and are vehicles to which humanity can glorify God, then we are blessed because there is no greater goal. If we still had that access to God's garden, our power over such difficulties, power from God, not of us, would be much more available and potent.

However, it should be noted that this act of self-glorification by God through the miracle Christ performed to heal the blind man is as a response (a pre-known response) to dealing with a sinful humanity and, in the big picture, evil. By this I mean that God is glorifying himself through this act precisely because Adam and Eve and their descendants do not glorify God (sin of omission) and, by and large, lost the ability to glorify Him to their fullest due to their eviction from and prevention of returning to the garden. Therefore, in that way this act was "because" of sin, although I contend the blind man was not being punished for sin.

Similarly with Job, He was not being punished for some sinful characteristic, but the fact that God and Satan were, in essence, having a spiritual-level duel, is precisely because of God battling evil. In God's sovereignty, He has the right to use us so. But likewise, there is no indication that such an occurrence wouldn't have occurred were it not for sin. God is battling evil, not sin. Sin has been overcome. The purpose of our salvation is that we reach a humble recognition of Him and His superiority, and our inferiority. We are still to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). If God is sovereign, He is sovereign after and before the fall, not subject to our actions. If His authority is subject to our sin, then He is not sovereign. He has authority over us regardless of sin.

From an apologetic standpoint, this also impacts our response to the "if God is so good" questions. First, we have to define what is "good", as noted in previous segments of this essay. But the young earth response, indeed common response from much of Christendom today, is that God allows "bad" to happen so that the comparative glory of His goodness can be revealed. I would agree. But that comparative analogy requires consistency before and after the fall because of the immutability of God's character. It cannot be predicated on sin's entry, but on evil's existence. Genesis 1 indicates evil existed, otherwise there would be no need for a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If evil existed, then the glory of God could be compared to it. This was Adam and Eve's task. And it is the Lord Himself who has placed challenges before us as noted in Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

R.C. Sproul notes: "there could not be evil unless God ordained there to be evil."¹⁴ The only reason it is here is because God permitted it. It is for His glory that we sin (choose evil) because it thereby reveals not only His justice and righteousness but also His mercy to those who receive it as all things He "works to His will" (Eph. 1:11). Young or old earth would agree. Thankfully, and precisely due to God's sovereignty, we have hope. If God were not absolutely sovereign, there would be a chance that our hope would be futile.

Therefore what I would contend is not that suffering never existed prior to the fall, rather, that suffering increased and, more importantly, how we are able to deal with that suffering was changed. Eve's pain increased, Adam's work became painful, but the primary loss in the

curse was the prohibition to the direct access to the glory, provision and power of God demonstrated so beautifully in the garden. Adam and Eve took it for granted, and lost it. Today, the church could use a good shot in the arm of living by the Spirit and endeavoring to experience the power of God, not in some superstitious or “lotus position” way, but in real, tangible, effective ways, changing the culture and subduing this world for and with the glory of God.

There are numerous places in Scripture beyond what is mentioned above that indicate God is sovereign, not subject to our sinful whims. In Jeremiah 18 God compares himself to a potter who does what He wishes. Deuteronomy 13 indicates that God tests the Hebrew people with false prophets. In Romans 9, Paul writes of God’s authority to make some clay pots for “honor and some for dishonor” and “mercy to whom I show mercy, compassion on whom I have compassion,” indicating the counter to punishment, that being blessing and mercy, is also up to God’s sovereignty, not our actions.

Sure there are obvious locations where the faithful were rewarded and the cruel were punished, but it is not always the case, and we should not assume so. Romans 5 indicates that suffering can lead to hope and, through that, God’s love. God has all authority to test us, challenge us, and take our mortal lives. We are not on earth to pursue paradise or the easy life in an earthly sense. To always think “we do bad, then this; we do good, then that”, and that God is in this for our comfort and ease of life is a loose form of prosperity gospel, not THE Gospel.

This makes for troublesome apologetics as well. If the answer to the question “why do bad things happen...” is “because of human sin,” we are short changing the almighty God. Scripture has its faithful followers, many of whom are subjected to unconscionable difficulties for the sole reason of glorification of God. Job’s sufferings, Hosea’s marriage, Ezekiel’s painful prophecies, Elijah’s feelings of abandonment, the children of Bethlehem. From a Christian standpoint, we must also acknowledge that sufferings produces perseverance (Romans 5). We see in 1 Peter that we are to “obtain an inheritance” and that various trials may be as “proof of your faith.” God has every right to test us before or after the fall. Through that testing we would “obtain...the salvation of your souls,” or eternal life. Please do not confuse this, I am not presenting a works-based gospel. The opportunity for such obtaining work is solely through Christ, as Peter states. But that once we accept Christ’s work by the grace of God the Father, we may now enter into a time of testing to prove our belief.

This even affects a humanistic answer to the question. From a secular view it is often presented that if a good God exists then why do bad things happen. The question itself misses the point. But if we understand this existence is precisely for a trial of humanity versus evil, often without clear lines of demarcation due to our sin natures, then our answer becomes noticeably different.

Furthermore, there is no place in Scripture that says sickness or death did not exist prior to the fall. Romans 5 talks about man’s spiritual death, rectified in John 3:16. Animals are not mentioned in either portion, in lieu of a specific mention of man only. Look closely at John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would have eternal life.” The “world” here means the “created fallen totality of mankind,” not the animal kingdom. John 3:16, same Greek, same terms as Romans 5 and is not talking about eternal physical life, but spiritual life. Animals do not have a spirit. In fact, many young earth supporters such as John MacArthur read the death of Romans 5 as spiritual, not physical.¹⁵ Using John 3:16 as a comparison reveals the inappropriateness of reading Romans 5:12 as an all-encompassing death for every organism. That would be to read it as Adam sinned therefore death to every living thing but then salvation from God for only Adam, the bystanders are left behind.

Romans 8 notes the creation is under decay, but it does not attribute it to Adam or the curse, but merely to “He who subjected it.” It does not say why He subjected it. At most we can say because of “His good pleasure” as God works all things to His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). But through that portion of Romans where Paul is being very specific in attributing cause and effect, (sin to Adam, Rom. 5:12; redemption through Christ, 5:15 & chapter 6), he interestingly does not tie the decay of the universe to Adam’s sin. Romans 5 declares what effects Adam’s sin caused and goes no further.

As further evidence that Romans 8 is likely talking about creation before human history, is that it notes it is “awaiting the appearance of the children of God”, what Adam and Eve were intended to be and what those who come to Him are adopted as. Adam’s career was to produce children (multiply) of God that would help ease the very frustration all of creation was under by working for God’s glory. That was the challenge set before him.

THE “STRAIGHTFORWARD” READING

If we are to take a simple, straightforward reading of Genesis 2-3 (an argument often advanced by young-earth creationists when they defend 24-hour creation “days”) it seems that Genesis 2 and 3 is a brief description of some agricultural experiment gone horribly awry as the participants knowingly eat of the wrong tree, and hence lose eternal physical life. There are talking snakes (not scripturally attributed to the devil until 2 Timothy) that later eat dust. God apparently did not know where Adam was when God came back from wherever He was—leading to open theism, and that we tangibly do get knowledge about good and evil by eating actual fruit. There is much symbolism in this portion of text and inference required on the part of the reader.

Also, there are many lines of Scripture that, when taken in the straightforward reading of the text would be a misinterpretation. In

Luke 14:26 Jesus indicates we should “hate our father and mother” to be His disciple. Paul instructs us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17), yet his own writing of that statement would have been done when he would not have been praying. In Job 39 and 40, an animal is described as having “bones of bronze” and another that “breathes fire from its nostrils.” In 2 Peter it is noted “a day is like a thousand years”, merely implying God is not constrained by time, not providing an exact equation. Back to the sacrificial procedure, it is also noted that the animals were “food to your God” (Lev 22:21-25). All reasonable scholars would agree that the plain text here is figurative, said to make a point.

Furthermore, it was the plain, straightforward reading that got the Hebrews in trouble. Their interpretation predicted a governmental reign of the Messiah, not a spiritual reign. The Messiah would come back and literally take over, perhaps even leading a revolt. The palm branches waved during the Triumphal Entry were a political reference to such expectation,¹⁶ much like the republican elephant or democrat donkey. But Jesus berated the scribes and Pharisees many times with “haven’t you read...” [the Scriptures]? Christ’s true kingship was spiritual, was in His word, and it was misinterpreted. Walter Kaiser even argues that Eve misunderstood God’s indication that “her offspring would crush the serpents head” to be her very son, Cain due to the usage of the Hebrew in that portion of the text.¹⁷ Even so shortly after the creation of humanity did those very humans begin misinterpreting what God was intending!

R.C. Sproul notes concerning Genesis 1-3 that “in the opening chapters of the Bible we are confronted with a kind or form of literature which has elements of historical narrative and elements of symbolism mixed in an unusual way.”¹⁸ Many theologians recognize some level of multiple writing styles for this and other segments of scripture. In no way does it make such portions untrue or untrustworthy. It is merely a style of storytelling that may use some level of imagery. We, in our western, legalistic and chronological society do not readily understand such ways of revealing truth. But in historical, eastern writings such approaches are commonplace.

The approach of “literal” reading of scripture still requires context. A literal reading of the parable of the lost coin would indicate Jesus was really talking about a lost coin or the sower actually about agricultural success. Some parables are explained and others are not. Christ uses this mysterious way, truly a common practice amongst that culture although Christ took it to new levels, to divine out the true followers from the rest of the flock (Matt 13:11). Literalism must be within the bounds of the intent in which it is said or written, not based upon modern understandings or writing practices. A similar approach must also be taken when understanding the covenants or the feasts. There is so much beyond just what we see on the pages of scripture that require cultural context and frequently have somewhat disguised meanings that richly add to the whole of scripture.

We need to remember that the Bible was initially written by eastern minded people for eastern minded people. It was in a context of eastern culture, society and literature. Eastern thought tends to be less rigid and heavily image based. While the Bible holds clear and understandable truth throughout for any age or culture, we need to acknowledge this difference from our western, exacting and legalistic approach to literature and thought. Not that we should take away from scripture, but to understand that there is so much more underlying the words on the page. It is one thing to try to read scripture literally, but we must pursue the literalness in which it was intended, which is often difficult for us to accomplish.

So, if these perceptions of Eden, the fall, and the character of God are not defensible or, at least questionable, then what should we consider instead?

THE BIBLE EQUATION:

Genesis 1:28 = Genesis 12:3 = Isaiah 43:10 =
Jeremiah 13:11 = Matthew 28:19

“GO and Glorify ME!”

So far we have seen that the concepts of perfect marriage, perfect spiritual harmony, no pre-fall existence of “bad” things like pain and suffering, no carnivores, and that we could have stayed in the garden forever, are at best, highly suspect. Yet, these are critical points of the common young earth perspective, establishing the foundation of the rest of their interpretation of the text.

During the “days” of creation, it begins with a dark, formless, and void earth. All are foreboding and ominous terms. God begins transforming it through His word and power one step at a time. God overwhelms the darkness but leaves some darkness as a portion of the “day,” begins to provide shape and character to earth, and fill it with various forms of life. The spiritual implications should also be obvious. God brings light into darkness, life from death, peace from anarchy, order from chaos. Then He gets to day six, finishes His work, trains and prepares the only spirit-filled being for his career, and rests, giving instructions, or more appropriately marching orders, to this particular creation.

The Genesis 2 account is truly one of an educational process of Adam. God first presents plants, the basis of life and work. Humanity would be dependent upon plant life, as would all of the animal kingdom. The spiritual implication here should not be underestimated. These are the basics and only God can provide such material. This is indicative of a basic knowledge that God alone is our provision. We may plant the seed and water it, but it is God who makes it grow (1 Cor. 3). Then Adam is given opportunity to take that knowledge and name animals, revealing a certain level of understanding, trust, independence, logic and creativity that Adam has graduated to. But Adam learns he is incomplete in this process, needing a “helpmate suitable.” So Adam

has learned something on his own about his own character and dependencies. God provides, but God also shall provide an assistant to help keep Adam humble as well as be a partner whom must be edified. Therefore what Adam has learned must be presented to Eve as we see no teaching role by God toward Eve in the Genesis 2 account. Through this we see this initial establishment of the edification process mentioned so many times in scripture of knowledge-understanding-wisdom. And it is the process that gives God glory.

After Genesis 2, what we have in Genesis 1:28 is truly God's first mission statement. A short paraphrase may read, "Adam, go. Take me with you (Deut 31:3, Matt 28:20). Teach your children of me and my ways (all of Proverbs). I've spent a lot of time creating objects that reveal my glory (Romans 1, Psalm 19), but without a consciousness. Only you can choose to glorify me by my Word and your relationship with me (Deut 30). Now, cover this earth, master it and subdue it for My name's sake" (Gen 1:28, Jer 13). The goal was to overcome the evil of the world manifested spiritually and tangibly even *before* sin since evil was already present. God gave no indication that He was going to completely shield us from evil. Adam and His descendants were to be God's representatives with the glory of the Almighty conquering evil on His behalf. The first time we actually hear the Great Commission is not Matthew 28:19, it is Genesis 1:28.

This would be done by the progeny of Adam and Eve so that their children, and their children's children, would rejoice in the glory of God (1:28, "multiply and fill the earth"). Their constant glorification of their Creator would manifest itself in both spiritual blessing and harmony as well as tangible effects on the earth itself. Adam was to go and overcome the world's shortcomings to the glory of God. As soon as Cain was born, Adam and Eve had a mission field.

Many estimate, using certain assumptions,¹⁹ that Adam and Eve could have had at least 150 children directly due to their long life spans. With some basic assumptions about the size of the garden, it seems that in a matter of several decades the progeny of Adam and Eve would be overflowing the garden boundaries unless the garden was "transplanted." It does not seem logical that eventually Adam's progeny would have to be evicted into the harsh, un-subdued world merely because of overpopulation. Adam's skill as superintendent of the garden, both physically and spiritually, would provide the impetus for taking the garden to the rest of the not-so-Edenesque world. Eden was a home base, a source for "good seed." It was not intended to be the permanent residence.

I submit that Jesus, albeit indirectly, refers to this evangelistic concept in His parables about the Sower, the Vinedresser, and Trees of Good or Bad Fruit. Subdue it (the world, sin, anything un-Godly), bring forth good fruit and glorify Me in all that you do. It is not only that we should have fought against the temptation offered by the serpent, but Adam and Eve should have been already out of the garden *voluntarily*. They

were to be the aggressors, not passively waiting an attack from the devil.

The rest of the Bible is the story of God's conquest of evil through the redemption of man, not the redemption of man through the conquest of evil. In the story of Abraham, the covenant made was so that Abraham "would be a blessing to all nations" (Gen 12). In Isaiah the Hebrew nation was "to be my witnesses" (Isaiah 43). To whom? To non-believers: descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth, descendants of Noah, a descendant of Adam. In Ezekiel He placed them "at the center of nations" (v 5:5). In Jeremiah 13, God declares He selected Israel "that they might be My people for My fame, praise, and glory". In Matthew the Great Commission is given (v 28:19-20).

Christ fulfilled these covenant blessings and redemption noted in Genesis 2, 12 and 15, yet the subduing is to be completed by the sons of Adam yet today, just as God intended in Genesis 1:28. Where Adam was to take the "garden" (covenant of works) we are to take the Gospel until it is "preached to all nations" (Matt 24:14). Sinclair Ferguson notes:

"instead of making the whole world a garden, He placed a little garden at the center of the world and then told Adam and Eve to extend the borders of that garden until that garden filled the whole earth. There is a sense in which Genesis tells us the work of God was complete but hadn't yet reached it's final apex" in order that Adam and Eve might "share in the joy of the creative activity."²⁰

This is the most consistent and God glorifying message. The young earth perspective on the garden seems short sighted, man-centered and open to the idea that because of our sin, God had to go to "plan B." An omnipotent God does not need a "plan B."

We did not create evil. We chose evil that already existed and God was already in action to thwart—hence the use of the term "sin." Sin equates to "miss the mark." The analogy is to an archer shooting His arrow at the bull's eye. We missed a target already created. All evil is not of us. It is in us and must be subdued, but did not originate from us (Gen. 3:1, 22). Some may argue that God could not be a part of anything with evil in it, using Habakkuk 1:13 as their defense. Yet this also is an overreaching of interpretation. Habakkuk was questioning why God brought up a pagan, evil nation (the Chaldeans) to oppress the Israelites. He struggled with this in comparison to God's holiness. God not only allowed evil to triumph, it was God's providence to do so.

Furthermore God came down to reside on the Ark of the Covenant in a tabernacle built by human hands. He has "seen" our evil deeds, as many prophets note. He had a discussion with the devil himself in Job (chap. 1). Christ was in human flesh, experiencing all we experience and seeing evil at its core. God, while abhorring evil, is certainly powerful enough to actually be "in" amongst it. He does so explicitly to vanquish it, although He must clothe himself in human flesh to

do so. Where there is light there can be no darkness (John 1:5, 8:12; 2 Cor. 6:14). Were God to actually reveal His full glory, the light would overwhelm darkness to nothingness. But, from the beginning, it is our challenge to be vessels of that light (John 12:46, Eph. 5:8).

Therefore, the purpose of our salvation is not to address sin as much as it is to glorify God and demonstrate His righteousness. Even Christ, the innocent God-man, paying the price for our sin, said “take this cup from me, but not my will, but your will be done” (Matt 26:39). This was to glorify God. The call of the Great Commission is a call to duty, not just to salvation. We are called to be, and to make disciples, not to merely get souls to “say a magic prayer.” The purpose of our enlistment is to work, not just to reside. Within Christendom, I think this lends to a general mentality of “I’ve got mine,” as in salvation and contentment. Not uniformly, but still evident. It seems at any bookstore the purpose of the Christian life is to find fulfillment, satisfaction, and self-help. In essence, our own little paradise. But as John MacArthur notes, “this is not a gospel of self-fulfillment, it is a gospel of self-denial.”²¹ It is not about seeking paradise or happiness or even wishing that is what God had for us. It is about enslaving ourselves to God, the end of us, the beginning of Christ.

To look at what was intended for humanity before the fall, I think the most appropriate place to look is at Christ and His first close disciples. Take Peter. He had such powers of healing that at times even His mere shadow would heal many of sickness (Acts 5:15). Or when He cast out to death Ananias and Sapphira for dishonesty with their tithe (Acts 5:1-11), or raised Dorcas back to life with authority as He merely said “Tabitha, get up!” (Acts 9:36-43). The only other people noted with such authority were Paul and Christ Himself. And, with the appropriate demeanor, Peter stopped crowds from praising him, and instead directed the praise and glory to God (Acts 3:1-13). Were these glimpses at the intended role of Adam and Eve?

If the non-Eden world did still present the events of suffering and sickness before the fall, as I contend, could the original couple and their faithful progeny have had this effect on other progeny, and the earth, that had to deal with such suffering? Could the access to the garden, in both its physical and spiritual sense, have provided such power of the Spirit to do such things? While it is only inferred from scripture, it seems to make sense as the embodiment of what God desires of humanity is in Christ and His disciples. To the best of our knowledge all 12 of those disciples (minus Judas, plus Matthias) lived extremely holy and honorable lives, doing miracles with the authority of God, traveling much of the known world proclaiming the Gospel with the “whole armor of God” (Eph 6). This is a war on evil which must have been from the existence of evil and our first possible interaction with it. In 2 Peter 1:3-11 we see a clear summation of the results of our redemption. Not only do we gain freedom from our corrupted past, but we also gain tools to use to keep us from being “ineffective or unfruitful.” The implication being it is not only a pure spirit and

sinless life to be pursued, but a life of God glorifying productivity. Not that a perfect creation Christian would disagree with this scripture, but I argue that this is a condition prior to the fall. These were the requirements established in Genesis 1:28 and, if so, implies that there were some level of struggles and difficulties to face prior to sin entering the world.

Looking at Christ himself we see in Hebrews chapter 5 that he still “learned obedience through what he suffered” while in the flesh. He did it perfectly in honor of God the Father and thereby exemplified what God required of His Sons. R.C. Sproul notes, “We are not just saved by the death of Christ, but also by the life of Christ, because it is in His life of perfect obedience that Christ fulfills all of the terms laid down in the original covenant of works [with Adam].”²² His work was an example of what our works should have been. Therefore, through the new covenant of grace Christ not only provides for the covenantal redemption, but also satisfies the covenant of works offered by God to Adam, that Adam did not fulfill. He was our redeemer and our example as well as our salvation.

God’s call to us is not just a call to salvation but a call to obedience. When covenants were renewed and remembered, the resultant of the covenant reiteration was the people would generally say something along the idea of “we will serve the Lord” (e.g., see Joshua 24).

Yes, we are to have a relationship with him, but it is a relationship of servant to master, soldier to general, created being to Lord, following orders in obedience to the glory of our creator. Not one of equality as though God is our buddy and we could have just hung out with Him by merely obeying. God is on the warpath (I use that intentionally) against evil, and He made soldiers that would both serve him, and through our failure, we give Him the foreseen opportunity for even greater glory. Talk about a comeback! God’s pinnacle of creation disobeys right out of the gate, but God already has that covered with “the Lamb slain before the creation of the world” (Rev 13:8) because He knew it would be necessary. It can be said “but we had not populated the world yet, so there was not a need for mission.” Not in God’s eyes. God sees everything in history and future as a snapshot and a movie all at the same time. For Him, Glorification was just waiting to take place in this time constrained universe. Outside of time, there is no waiting for it to happen.

CONCLUSION

So, does this prove an old earth interpretation is correct? Absolutely not. All I contend is the Bible is non-specific about the age of the earth. It doesn’t present time, it presents events. However it does demonstrate that the common young earth perception, in fact, prerequisite criterion concerning the perfection of Eden is not an accurate reading of Scripture or image of the character of God. God did not make Eden as our “perfect eternal home” and we squandered it away. He made us to be His servants and planted the garden (v

2:8) to teach us of His glory. He planted the garden because the rest of His creation was not nearly so pleasant, needing to be “subdued” (v 1:28) sending us out to do His will. Our sin did not cause the entirety of creation to become fallible or cursed, but that our work, work that would have had direct access to the glorious garden, would now be much, much harder without that access and thereby produce thorns and thistles. C.S. Lewis notes “God is intensely interested in right conduct.”²³ This is not just a statement after the fact of sin. It is a statement of the consistency of God’s intention for humanity regardless of sin. He wants glory for what He and His creation do, just as much as for what we are. But, with our pride, it is as though God said simply, “You wanted to do it your own way, so have at it.” Our labor and suffering would increase, and ability to deal with such suffering would decrease merely because we were now using our own very limited power.

Therefore, if one of the major tenets, if not the greatest tenet of the young earth interpretive viewpoint is not justifiable, then what about the rest of the young earth position? If the whole of the universe was not corrupted by man’s sin, then the Atonement does not have to be a remedy for that supposed corruption, just as it is never noted in Scripture to be such a cure. While man can be redeemed in accepting the free Gift, the rest of creation will pass away, unredeemed with no alternative or hope. The Atonement is solely for man’s redemption of our failure to obey His commands and honor, glorify and serve Him from the outset.

This makes biblical sense as well, since God himself instituted the “cruel” process of animal sacrifice as a reminder of the promise of the coming atonement in the Messiah. If animal death is considered cruel for God the creator to do before sin, then why would He prescribe such action as a ritual even after sin? That is tantamount to saying “because of the evil you did, I order you to do something else cruel.” Animal death did not suddenly become “uncruel” after the fall. It is part of God’s design, to His satisfaction. And, just as God created animals of varying kinds to serve us, we were created to serve Him not only from the fall, but from before the fall.

From an old earth view, animal death before sin is not a problem and in no way tarnishes the image of God. The “imperfection” is a completely subjective description. It is His creation, after all, and spiritless creatures have no choice but to obey Him or, when He allows, be possessed by the evil one (Luke 8 and the herd of pigs). They are powerless to resist the supernatural realm. Likewise the atonement is for man’s failure and man’s failure only. There is no need, nor indication that animals in any way are redeemed or somehow “mended” due to Christ’s sacrificial work on the cross.

Suffering is presented as a blessing (beatitudes, Romans 5:3, 8:18, 2 Tim 2:3) for the specific reason that it glorifies Him. Pain seems to be included in the pre-fall equation and a necessary part of our existence.

How much more would it be glorified had we pure access to God’s garden!

In addition, it is often claimed that sinful man cannot see things of the natural world correctly without looking at it through the lens of the Bible. While this may seem appealing, it is not wholly accurate nor scripturally supportable. Such a thought would contradict Psalm 19 and Romans 1 where the unsaved, unchosen, non-regenerate man can see evidence of the glory of God clearly. Calvin notes “Those men whom Scripture 1 Corinthians 2:14 calls “natural men” were, indeed, sharp and penetrating in their investigation of inferior things. Let us, accordingly, learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good.”²⁴

The curse should be read just as it is. There is no mention of physical death for animals all of sudden beginning. There is an inference that pain was already something Eve would have been familiar with (Gen. 3:16 “intensify” not “begin” or “start”). An appropriate reading shows that Adam may have already been “destined” to “return to the ground,” barring access to the tree of life (3:19, 22), immortality was not inherent.²⁵ So physical death already existed, it simply could have been avoided by Adam and Eve had they kept access to the garden and the tree of life. Had they stayed in obedience and faithfulness subduing the earth they could have eaten of that tree (2:16). Even so, that tree could be purely a spiritual connection as Christ notes that “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev 2:7). By following Christ, we do not receive a physical access to a physical garden but a spiritual power from God and spiritual immortality with God.

Peter notes that we are a people selected by God to “obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4), indicating that reward for obedience has nothing to do with this terrestrial, temporal earth.

John Calvin, in his Institutes of the Christian Religion I believe reflects the true historic theological opinion on the purpose of humanity. “When man withdrew his loyalty to God, he was deprived of the spiritual gifts which had lifted him to the hope of eternal salvation” indicating several aspects.²⁶ First, that loyalty was not just in not eating of the tree, but in obediently following orders of action. The term “loyalty” implies not only obedience but service, i.e., not simply avoidance of the tree, but to also follow orders of action. Secondly, being deprived of spiritual gifts further implies a sense of spiritual power that now, due to our disloyalty, we can only regain in part through Christ. Third, that eternal salvation was the hope of mankind even before the fall, not an inherent trait of humanity. And, finally, that the fact of sin and the fall, and thereby the impact of the Atonement apply to man and man’s ability to glorify God. Broadening such impacts of the curse and such remedies of the Sacrifice beyond those specific items is neither scripturally sound nor necessary.

This would change our approach to science apologetics and scriptural support therein. From a “why is there evil” standpoint, we can now say that evil was around before us and we chose it while God was establishing His plan to conquer it. Not that it came about because of our sin. This places the objective for our existence in a proper perspective. We are here to conquer that evil by glorification of God, not to pursue a comfortable, paradisiacal life. Nowhere in scripture was it ever promised by God to us that the purpose of our existence while here on this earth was the good life. The only way you can get to such a conclusion is by reading much inference and assumption into the scriptures because we want to have the good life. But in truth, evil exists because we, humanity, are to fight it, not to just wait around and wonder why God doesn’t take care of that pesky devil. As R.C. Sproul notes, “we were created to shine forth to the world the holiness of God.”²⁷

The framework for the young earth perception of a perfect creation, while enticing and romantic in many ways, is simply not supportable. We are now free of the requirement of no death before the fall, that man somehow ruined the perfection of Eden, if not the whole universe. While this may seem like we are reducing our impact on creation, and hence our perceived guilt, what is truly happening is we are finding our rightful place within the created order as a servant, not a partner, and giving God His appropriate due in sovereignty and action. We are not so powerful to utterly, cosmically harm creation and we must also acknowledge the glory in the glorifying, even through struggles and challenges, placing our hope in the purpose, not the place. All things go back to the Almighty Lord and God himself, and to Him only. We therefore are in much better alignment with an all knowing, all powerful God who is not caught off guard or has to resort to alternatives. His plan was, and is, His plan from the beginning, Genesis 1:1.

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[IMPORTANT NOTE: The articles published in the Seattle Chapter newsletter represent the views of chapter members and others associated with the RTB Ministry. They do not necessarily represent the official views of RTB. The purpose of these articles is to stimulate thought and expose readers to a variety of apologetic issues.]

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 - a. “I approve of Augustine’s dictum that man’s natural gifts were corrupted by sin, and his supernatural gifts withdrawn. He referred to the supernatural gifts of righteousness and the light of faith which would have enabled man to attain a place in heaven and everlasting happiness. When man withdrew his loyalty to God, he was deprived of the spiritual gifts which had lifted him to the hope of eternal salvation. So it follows that

he is an exile from the kingdom of God and everything which belongs to the spiritual life is extinguished, until he regains them by the grace of regeneration. Among these are faith, love to God and neighbour and the study of righteousness and holiness. When these are restored to us by Christ, they might be thought of as above and beyond nature. Then we infer that they were once wiped out. At the same time, soundness of mind and integrity of soul were withdrawn and it is this which produces the corruption of natural gifts. Although there is a residue of intelligence and judgment as well as will, a mind which is weak and darkened cannot be called sound and whole. The depravity of the will is only too well known. So, since reason, by which man discerns between good and evil and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be completely destroyed.”

27 *The Holiness of God*, R.C. Sproul, Living Books, ppb, pg 223.

Additional note: In my references to Unveiling Glory, Perspectives, Mr. Steven Hawthorne, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, Dr. R.C. Sproul or Dr. John Piper, I do not presume to know their position on the age of the earth or their opinions on propositions noted in this essay nor do I suggest they are “old” or “young” earth supporters. Their references used here only refer to God’s purposes, glorification, sovereignty, and missiological directives.



Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

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The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

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- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
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