

# Genesis: Does the age of the earth matter?

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In the last couple of hundred years there has been much discussion about the age of the earth and the universe. The question for us is: Does it matter if we believe that the earth is a few thousand years old or billions of years old? If it matters, then how and why does it matter?

## Key Verses

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,” (2 Tim. 3:16-4:3 LSB)
- “Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet. 1:20-21 LSB)

## Definitions

Exegesis:

The process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages. Ideally, exegesis involves the analysis of the biblical text in the language of its original or earliest available form, since any translation presents at least a slight barrier to precise definition of the intent of the passage’s words. The passage involved may be of virtually any length, subject to the interest of the exegete. The goal of exegesis is to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage. Exegesis, in other words, places no premium on speculation or inventiveness; novelty in interpretation is not prized. In most

circles, exegesis is also part of the theological enterprise, functioning as a basic means of achieving accuracy in interpreting the word of God.<sup>1</sup>

Eisegesis:

the interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one's own ideas<sup>2</sup>

## Setting

Genesis was written by Moses sometime between 1446 BC and 1406 BC during the wilderness wanderings after Israel left Egypt. During their time in Egypt, the Israelites were exposed to the Egyptian belief system and gods. They apparently still had gods with them from as far back as Abraham's father since Joshua told them: *“So now, fear Yahweh and serve Him in integrity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh.”* (Josh. 24:14 LSB)

It would appear that Genesis was written for a number of reasons, which would include

- Providing the Israelites an accurate history of their nation and the world.
- To reveal to them who the true God is.
- To provide a basis for the laws which they received.
- To provide them with the direction of their future, including the land that was allotted to them by God.

## Teachings in Genesis

- The first thing is that God created everything in the beginning. He is therefore outside of time and space.
- We also get some basics about who God is.
- Next, we are given the order and timeline of the creation. The timeline is very precise, the formula “there was evening and there was morning, a second day” always means a 24-hour day. Note that in 1:14-19 state that the lights in the sky were for separating night and day, for seasons and days and years. Clearly, days cannot be years.
- Gen 1:9 – 31 provide the basis for biogenesis.
- Gen 1:26-27 Man is made in God's image (Gen 5:1, 1 Cor 11:7, Jas 3:9)
- When creation was completed, God said that everything was “very good”.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Stuart, “Exegesis,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 682.

<sup>2</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

- Gen 2:21-23 Eve was made from Adam's rib.
- Gen 1:27 is the basis for 2 sexes – male and female to the exclusion of all other ideas.
- Gen 2:16-17 is the basis for death, i.e. if you eat of the fruit, you will surely die.
- Gen 2:18-25 is the basis for marriage. (Matt 19:5-6, Mk 10:7-8, Eph 5:31)
- Gen 3:1 reveals one of Satan's most powerful weapons: "Did God really say". He still uses this today, always getting people to question God's Word in order to deceive and turn people away from God.
- Gen 3:7 reveals the reason for clothes that cover the private parts.
- Gen 3:15 is the first prophecy about the Redeemer.
- Gen 3:16 is the reason for increased pain in childbirth for the woman.
- Gen 3:17 is the reason for weeds, the ground not producing as well and the need to work hard.
- Adam and Eve were real historical people.
- Abel and Cain were real people with Abel bringing an appropriate offering and Cain one that was not acceptable.
- Gen 5 provides the lineage from Adam to Noah. This chronology is very precise. When the father was xx years old, that son was born and the father lived another xx years.
- Gen 5:21 gives the account of Enoch who walked with God and was taken without dying. He shows up in the book of 1 Chr, Luke, Hebrews and Jude.
- Gen 6 provides the basis for the worldwide flood: "Now the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth." (Gen. 6:11-13 LSB)
- Gen 7 & 8 record that all land and air animals and people, other than those on the ark, perished. So, all people, birds and land animals that we see today are descendants of the survivors on the ark.
- Gen 9:6, man being made in the image of God is the basis for capital punishment.
- There is a promise by God that he would never again blot out all flesh with a flood. This means that Noah's flood could not have been a local flood. The timeline of the flood is very detailed.
- Gen 9:28 and chapter 11 provide the rest of the genealogy from Noah to Abraham. Again, we have a similar precise chronology. When the father was xx old, he had a son.
- Gen 11:1-9 is the basis of the various languages
- In chapter 12:1-3, we have the promise to Abraham: "And Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, And from your kin And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."" (Gen. 12:1-3 LSB)

- Gen 13:14-17, 15:7,18 records the promise of God to give Abraham and his descendants the land forever. Later, the extent of the boundaries is defined.
- Gen 14:18 introduces Melchizedek, who later is referenced in Ps 110 and Hebrews.
- Gen 16:11-12 is the basis for the Arab-Israel conflict.
- Gen 17:19 is the basis for the covenant extending through Isaac, not Ishmael.
- Gen 28:4, 13-15, 35:9-12, 48:3-4 establish that the covenant with Abraham is extended through Jacob (Israel) not Esau.

## Old Testament

While the historicity of Genesis is always assumed to be true, there are specific mentions of Adam for example. We also need to realize that Job lived around the general time of Abraham, so Job knows of the account of Adam prior to Moses writing Genesis.

- Exodus 20:11 God wrote on the tablet of stone that He made the earth in 6 days – the basis for the Sabbath.
- “If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,” (Job 31:33 LSB)

Hosea says:

- “But like Adam they have trespassed against the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.” (Hos. 6:7 LSB)

Josephus, a Pharisee and Historian of the first century AD, in his writings shows that the common understanding at the time of Jesus was that Genesis is a historical account. He takes the chronology in Genesis literally and comes up with the age of the earth from that.

## New Testament Implications

### Jesus

- Jesus, when Satan tempted Him, used Scripture authoritatively and Satan had no comeback. Satan could not say “well that’s just your interpretation”. In fact, throughout His ministry, He used Scripture authoritatively and considered all the events and people actual historical truth.
- In Matt 5:18, He says “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” See also Lk 16:17.
- In Mk 10:2-10, Jesus says that from “the beginning of creation” God made them male and female. (Matt. 19:3-9). This indicates several things:
  - Adam and Eve were created at the beginning of creation, not billions of years later.

- This is where marriage, being one man and one woman for as long as they live is affirmed.
- This is the basis for the sexual immorality laws.
- Jesus considered the account of Cain killing Abel a historical event. Matt. 22:35, Lk 11:51.
- Jesus said that in the flood of Noah's day, all perished. Matt. 24:38-39, Lk 17:26-27. In the same way will the coming of Jesus be. Will it be all or just some in the end?
- Jesus considered Abraham, Isaac and Jacob historical persons that would be in heaven. Matt: 8:11, Matt 22:32, Mk 12:26, Lk 13:28.
- Abraham is the historical person described in Genesis in various passages. Matt 1:1-17, 3:9, 8:11, 22:32, Mk 12:26, Lk 1:55, 1:73, 3:8, 3:34, 13:16, 13:28, 16:23-29, 19:9, 20:37, Jn 8:39-40, 8:56.
- The account of Sodom and Gomorrah is considered historical fact. Matt. 10:15, 11:23-24, Lk 10:13.
- The account of Lot's wife is historical. Lk 17:32.
- Luke records the genealogy from Jesus all the way back to Adam, the son of God.

## New Testament Writers

- Sin and Death entered the world through one man. Ro 5:12-19, 1 Cor 15:21-22. Crucial doctrines here.
  - There was no death prior to Genesis 3 when Adam sinned. This is the reason that Jesus had to come, without Genesis 3 and a literal Adam that was created in Genesis 1, the whole reason for Jesus does not exist.
  - In vs 14, he specifically references Adam and Moses as real people.
  - Adam is a type of (Jesus) Him who was to come.
  - One sinned and one redeemed, referring to Adam and Jesus.
  - Judgement arose from one transgression, the transgression of Adam.
  - Paul says: "So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor. 15:45 LSB)
- The prohibition of female Pastors/Elders is based on the actual Genesis 3 account of an actual Adam and Eve and of Eve being deceived. This completely removes any kind of cultural context argument against this doctrine. 1 Tim 2:12-14.
- In 2 Cor 11:3, Paul again references the actual Genesis 3 account of Eve being deceived.
- Enoch is referenced as an actual person in Hebrews and Jude, with Jude specifying that he was the 7<sup>th</sup> from Adam.
- Hebrews, in the faith chapter references Abel's sacrifice, Enoch as pleasing to God and Noah's faith in building the ark and saving his family, Abraham and others on through history, all being actual historical people.
- Peter specifically says that 8 people were saved in the flood. 1 Pet 3:20.

## General Theological Problems with not taking Genesis as actual History

- Historically, from the time of writing Genesis by Moses, up until the last couple of hundred years, Genesis was considered actual history. Creation in 6 regular days, the chronology revealed the age of the earth (a few thousand years) and the flood was a worldwide flood that destroyed all land and air animals (other than those on the ark) a few thousand years ago.
- Without Genesis 1-2, there is no basis for
  - Only male and female sexes.
  - Lifelong marriage, no adultery or other sexual immorality.
  - Reproduction of plants and animals after their kind.
  - The identity of the creator God.
  - Man made in the image of God. 1 Cor 11:7-8
- Genesis 3 provides the basis for
  - Death and suffering.
  - The need and prophecy of a saviour.
  - The reason for weeds and the ground not producing as it was intended.
- Genesis 6 introduces Melchizedek, who is referenced in Psalm 110 and Hebrews. Jesus being a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.
- Genesis 16 provides the basis for the Israel – Arab conflict.
- If we do not take Genesis as actual history, we have Old Testament writers that are wrong as well as Jesus and the writers of the New Testament.
- It seems the real issue is people performing “eisegesis” rather than “exegesis”. People have their own ideas that they want to read into the text of Scripture. In essence, they want to be the judge of Scripture, rather than having Scripture determine truth. This is the same issue that we have in the garden of Eden when Satan deceived Eve with “Did God really say”. This is where false doctrines and teachings originate. As soon as you open the door in one case by saying “that is a divisive topic and is not a salvation issue, so let people have their own interpretation of it” you open the door to other texts being “interpreted” according to people’s own ideas rather than what the text actually says. The Bible then loses its authority and then its relevancy.
- While it is not an actual salvation issue, it easily leads to the next generation rejecting the Scriptures as they encounter the teachings in school, college and university of evolution and related philosophies and worldviews that “scientifically” prove the Bible is false. If Genesis is not true as plainly read, then the rest also does not have any authority. It becomes a document written by people, rather than inspired by God. This then allows people to decide for themselves what is right or wrong – exactly the deception that Satan used with Eve.

- Another item to seriously consider is that; since God, through Moses made the history and chronology of Creation and the lineage to Abraham an important centerpiece in the record of creation and the rest of the history to Abraham and on to Jesus, why are people trying to minimize it or change its meaning? It was obviously important to God since He gave us the historical and chronological data from day one of Creation to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. After that He continues to give specific chronological markers such as the Exodus being 430 years to the day (Ex 12:40-41) and it was in the 480<sup>th</sup> year after leaving Egypt that Solomon began to build the temple (1Ki 6:1). We really need to take all this chronological data seriously and not try and adapt it to the world's interpretation of data, especially, since the world is trying to undermine the historicity, reliability and authority of the Bible.

We can see that if we do not take Genesis as actual history the way it is written, we run into serious consequences. If Genesis is not true the way it is clearly written and the way it was historically understood, including the Israelites at the time of writing at the time of the exodus, then that undermines the reliability and authority of the entire Scriptures and the basis of the Gospel. We can see how that has worked itself out today with so many churches and leaders straying from the truth of Scripture and promoting ideas that are contrary to Scripture. They are at times loving people into Hell.

Consider the following:

- Scripture says that God cannot lie. Num 23:19, Tit 1:2, Heb 6:18.
- [“Then God spoke all these words, saying,”](#) (Ex. 20:1 LSB)
- [““Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yahweh your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female slave or your cattle or your sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”](#) (Ex. 20:8-11 LSB)
- Therefore, if someone says that the earth was not made in 6 days, (literal 24 hours being the only possible reading here) he is effectively calling God a liar. That is pretty serious.

Therefore, the question about the age of the earth is not really about the age of the earth, but rather about the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures, the basis of the Gospel and the Character of God. It is kind of ironic that those that hold to the historical, plain reading of the text are the ones who are painted as the problem people, rather than those that deviate from the plain historical understanding.

## Satan the deceiver

- Satan deceived Eve in Gen 3.

- Jesus calls him a liar Jn 8:44.
- Rev 20:3 says that Satan is the deceiver.

A powerful deception is one that has a lot of truth in it and that sounds good.

A very powerful deception is one that has a lot of truth and appears to benefit or at least cause no damage by following it.

When one is deceived, by definition they are not aware of being deceived. Many well-meaning Christians are subtly undermining the very Scriptures they are trying to defend and promote thereby endangering subsequent generations.

“Trust in Yahweh with all your heart

And do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will make your paths straight.” (Prov. 3:5-6 LSB)