

Overview - How are we to understand the Biblical account of Creation?

Saint Augustine

“The universe was brought into being in a less than fully formed state, but was gifted with the capacity to transform itself from unformed matter into a truly marvelous array of structure and life forms.”

1.

Hebrews 11:3

2.

Genesis 1-2

Hebrews is a book that interprets what is seen through the filter of what is not seen.

Hebrews 11:3

“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that **what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.**”

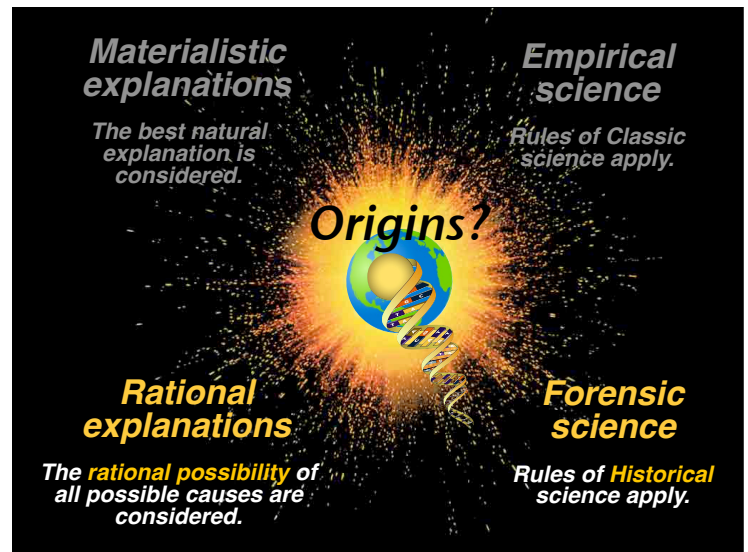
Hebrew 11:3

“By faith we understand”

1.

“Faith” is necessary in explaining origins.

- Science is equipped to explain how things operate (secondary means) not how they originate (primary means).
- The “primary origin” question cannot be answered without “faith” presuppositions.



Varieties of “science” and the origins question.

Open rationalism

- the best explanation from all sources.
(Occam’s razor)

Methodological naturalism

- how the universe usually works.
(Limited science)

Biblical Creationism

- Scripture guided explanations of nature.
(Creation “science”)

Philosophical naturalism

- how the universe exclusively works.
(Idolatrous science)

Hebrew 11:3

“By faith we understand that the **worlds (ages)** were prepared”

“world” (three Greek words)

COSMOS - an orderly place. OIKOUMENE - an abode for people.

AION - an age or period of time. Ephesians 2:1-2 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course (aion) of this world (cosmos), according to the prince of the power of the air.”

2.

The creation involves more than just matter and space but also time and process.

Colossians 1

“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, **whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities**; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

3.

Jesus was the Creator.

Hebrew 11:3

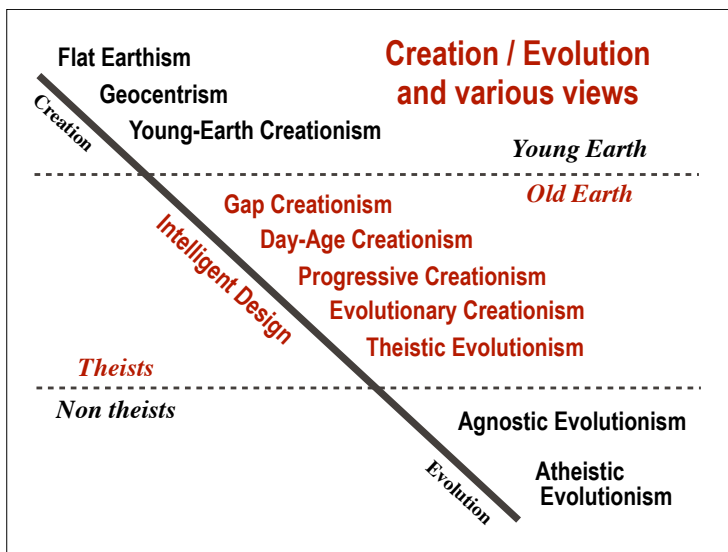
“By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared **(have been adjusted so as to fit)**”

Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning **when** God created the heavens and the earth, **the earth was without form and void.**”

4.

The creation account is really a story of “populating the raw, undeveloped earth”.



The interpretation of Gen. 1 & 2

Technical - historical narrative	Literary - cosmological narrative	Mythical - primitive cosmology
authoritative scientifically precise	authoritative theologically directed	not authoritative example of ancient myth
days = 24 hrs	days = framework	days = mythological

What kind of narrative is Genesis 1-2?

Technical

1. Young earth literalism - reaction to modernism
2. Gap (1:1 / 1:2) - old earth modification of #1

Literary

3. Historical Allegory - ancient Christian view.
4. Theological metaphor - modern version of #3.

Mythical

5. Reworked myth - copied from Mesopotamia
6. Fallible human product - ancient cosmology

What is the proper “literary” interpretation of - ?

Exodus 31:18

“He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written by the finger of God**”

Psalms 78:69

“the earth which is founded forever”

2 Peter 3:10

“the earth and its works will be burned up”

What is the proper “literary” interpretation of Luke 16?

“19 Now there was a certain rich man, . . . 20 And a certain poor man named Lazarus . . . 22 Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and **saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.** 24 And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, **between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.**’”

What is the proper “literary” interpretation of Acts 2?

“15 For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but **this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:** ‘17 And it shall be in the last days, God says, That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; 18 Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. 19 **And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.** 20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood,** Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 21 And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

What is the proper “literary” interpretation of Gen.1?

The Genesis author was simply writing in the ‘politically-correct’ cosmogenic and prose-narrative style of that day.

It was not written to satisfy our modern interests of science or technical history.

It was written to correct false ancient and modern theological and cosmological views.

We can’t be too dogmatic in how we harmonize Genesis and science.

Biblical narratives that some think are not intended to be treated as technical history in EVERY detail.

Old Testament Prophecies

Jonah vs. Nineveh

Joshua’s long day

The temptation of Jesus

The book of Revelation

The Creation narratives?

Genesis 1 creation narrative.

“From chaos to cosmos”

Problem	Preparation	Population
	Day #1	Day #4
“darkness”	dividing light from darkness	luminaries
	Day #2	Day #5
“the great deep”	dividing the waters from above and	fish and fowl
	Day #3	Day #6
“formless and void”	dividing land from sea	mammals and man
Day #7 The Sabbath		

Hebrews 11:3
Original creation of matter and the ages



Genesis 1 creation narrative

The Hebrew terms used in Genesis suggest that God formed the cosmos from preexisting material.

create make
ברא bara עשה asah
form fashion
יצר yatsar בנה banah

Genesis 1 creation narrative.



Summary sentence
Gen.1:1
“In the beginning God
created the heavens and the
earth.”

Six days of Creation
Gen.1:3-2:3

Summary sentence
Gen.2:1
“Thus the heavens and
the earth were completed,
and all their host.”

Genesis 1

Genesis 2

The position of God & man in the creation	The role of Man in his environment
Elohim - creator	YHWAH - covenanter
Logical order	Moral order
Correcting pagan views of reality	

*The purpose of Gen. 1 & 2 was theological
and apologetical not scientific or historical.*

Hebrew 11:3

“By the Word of God ”

**5. The Biblical creation account calls us to
respect both primary and secondary means.**

Primary means	Secondary means
Known from Scripture	Known from science
God’s initiating	God’s implementing
Supernatural Word	Natural (?)
Will science respect this?	Will Christians respect this?

Illustrations

“Primary means”

Exodus 12:42

“It (Passover) is a night to be observed for
the Lord **for having brought them out from
the land of Egypt.**”

“Secondary means”

Exodus 14:21

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the
sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by **a
strong east wind all night** and turned the sea
into dry land, so the waters were divided.”

Illustrations

“Primary means” & “Secondary means”

Genesis 50:20

“As for you, **you meant** evil
against me, but **God meant** it
for good in order to bring about
this present result, to preserve
many people alive.”

Illustrations

“Primary means”

1 Peter 1:23

“for you have been born again not of seed
which is perishable but imperishable, that
is , **through the living and enduring word
of God.**”

“Secondary means”

1 Peter 1:25

““*But the word of the Lord endures forever.*”
And this is the word which **was preached to
you.**”

Illustrations

“Primary means”

Romans 8:30

“and these whom **He predestined, He also called**; and these whom He called, **He also justified**; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

“Secondary means”

Romans 10

“¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? **How will they believe** in Him whom they have not heard? And **how will they hear without a preacher?** ¹⁵ How will they preach **unless they are sent?**”

Illustrations

“Primary” & “Secondary means”

Genesis 1:24

“Then God said, “**Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind**”; . . . and it was so.”

What does “Let the earth (nature) bring forth” imply or allow?

Conclusions - Biblical creation accounts

1. I cannot be dogmatic as to what kind of narrative we have in Gen. 1-2.
2. The Scripture acknowledges both primary and secondary means.
3. The purpose of Biblical revelation seems to be concerned with more important issues than science.
4. The science of life’s origin is best critiqued by science not Scripture.

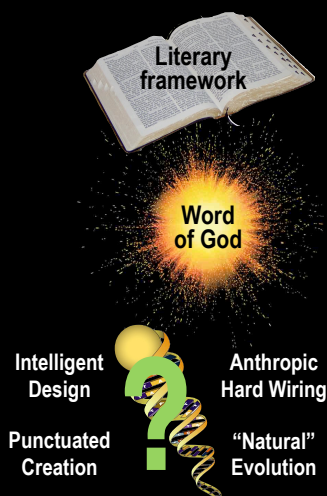
Does the secondary means give any hint of the primary means?

1. **Cosmology**: If it has a beginning “Big Bang” it has a cause.
2. **Physics**: The mathematical improbability of life through natural chance is very high.
3. **Biochemistry**: Irreducible complexity in many biological systems suggest a designer.
4. **Bio information**: Sequenced information in DNA is a fit only with an intelligent (not natural) cause.
5. **Self consciousness**: There is no natural way to account for this.

The Narrative of Creation
(The Biblical account)

The Theology of Creation
(Primary means)

The Science of Creation
(Secondary means)



When the question of ultimate origins is addressed in public schools

1. **Explanations of ultimate origin should not be treated as scientific facts.**
2. **Public education should nuance the evolution / creation question in line with point #1.**
3. **Evolution should be taught only as an operating model for our understanding of how life forms are related.**
4. **The origin and nature of humans should be explained with proper reference to assumptions behind the models used.**