

Verse-by Verse Study of Genesis Chapters 1-3

These Three Chapters, the First Three Chapters of the Bible, Provide the Foundation to Understand God, Creation, Man, the Devil and his Kingdom of Darkness, Sin and the Fall of Man, the God-Man and His Kingdom of Light, Righteousness, Salvation, and Judgment

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In this internet version I am not including the lengthy Extended Notes that were included in the original paper. The only other substantial modification is that I have substantially abbreviated some of the lengthy quotations that were included in the original paper. The Extended Notes are still listed in the Contents (next page). I plan to prepare an abbreviated version of the Extended Notes and upload that document to this web site in the near future, and I still have several copies of the original 273 page paper.

**by Karl T. Kemp
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(These Extended Notes are not included in this document; see the title page.)

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INTRODUCTION

The first three chapters of Genesis are extremely important. They serve as a foundation for the rest of the book of Genesis and the rest of the Bible. These chapters teach us about God's creation of our world, His creation of man (male and female) in His image, the temptation and fall of Eve and then Adam in the garden of Eden with the resultant spiritual death (and the beginning of the process of physical death) and the expulsion from the garden, in which they had enjoyed a life-flowing relationship with God. Because of their fall, all of their offspring were born into spiritual death, outside of the garden. However—thanks be to God!—these chapters include the promise of the ultimate overthrow and removal of Satan and his kingdom of sin, darkness, and death and the ultimate salvation of mankind (all believers) through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15).

Before I started this study, I hadn't spent much time on the details of Genesis chapter 1, but I had nailed down some key items, though not always with complete assurance. I'll list some key issues regarding the interpretation of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis and make several comments.

The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1. I had already become pretty well convinced that the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 starts with the earth already existing. The earth already existed, but it was in the desolate state pictured in Gen. 1:2 when this creation, or you call it a recreation, began. Genesis 1:1 speaks, in summary form, of the creating that takes place throughout the six days of Genesis chapter 1; Genesis 1:1 can be considered a *title* for the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3.¹ (This viewpoint doesn't deny that God created all things, including matter, out of nothing; it locates that creation before Gen. 1:1.) Now I'm more solidly convinced that this is the correct interpretation, the interpretation intended by God. This interpretation is fairly common, as I demonstrate in this paper.

The Interpretation of Genesis 1:2. I was pretty well convinced that the desolate state of the earth pictured in Gen. 1:2 had been caused by God's judgment of a rebellion led by Satan that involved the earth after that high-level angelic being (apparently one of the cherubim; cf. Ezek. 28:13-16²) rebelled and fell from his righteous state and became an enemy of God (he became Satan/the devil). This high-level angelic being apparently had authority on the earth (not that he was limited to the earth) before his rebellion and fall; he would have been created, ministered under God, and rebelled and been judged (judged in a preliminary sense; his final judgment is still future) all before Gen. 1:1.

I originally learned this viewpoint regarding Gen. 1:2 as a young Christian through the so-called "gap view" of Gen. 1:1, 2.³ The gap view teaches that Gen. 1:1 refers to God's initial creation of everything, including matter, out of nothing, and that Satan rebelled and was judged by God during a gap (a large gap) of time that existed between

¹ This viewpoint is discussed under Genesis chapter 1 and in Extended Note B in this paper.

² A verse-by-verse study of Ezekiel chapter 28 is included in Extended Note C.

³ The gap view is discussed in Extended Note A.

Gen. 1:1 and 1:2. I agree with what the gap view teaches regarding Gen. 1:2, but I believe it is far better to interpret Gen. 1:1 the way I suggested above.

The More Traditional Interpretation of Genesis 1:1, 2. The more traditional interpretation of Gen. 1:1, 2 has God creating everything, including matter, out of nothing in Gen. 1:1, with Gen. 1:2 picturing the earth in an intermediate state of creation, before God has finished His work of creating. It is as if God had said when He created the earth, “Let the earth come into being in a chaotic, desolate form (as the earth is pictured in Gen. 1:2), then I’ll finish the job.” One major shortcoming with this more traditional interpretation of Gen. 1:1, 2 is that it doesn’t leave any room for the rebellion and judgment of Satan and those who followed him in his rebellion against God that is so extremely important to the unfolding of the history of the earth and mankind. Furthermore, you really have to strain to see the creation of the angelic kingdom in Gen. 1:1.

With the more traditional viewpoint, we are totally unprepared for Satan (an evil, fallen being who hates God and man) to come on the scene in Genesis chapter 3 or for the existence of anything evil (not good) in God’s created universe. It’s clear that God’s creative (recreative) work spoken of in Genesis chapter 1 was all *good*. Genesis chapter 1 informs us six times that God’s creative (recreative) work was good, and once that it was very good. Sin, Satan, and *darkness* (using the word *darkness* in a symbolic/spiritual sense) all existed before God’s creative (recreative) work that is spoken of in Genesis chapter 1 began; they were not part of His creative (recreative) work that is spoken of in Genesis chapter 1.

Symbolic/Spiritual Language in Genesis Chapters 1-3. I believe there is quite a bit of symbolic/spiritual language in Genesis chapters 1-3 and that it is extremely important to recognize this fact and to incorporate it in our interpretation of these chapters. I have observed, however, that most Christians fail to recognize the symbolic/spiritual component in these chapters.

I believe the interpretation of Genesis chapters 1-3 that recognizes the strong symbolic/spiritual component is far more accurate. Furthermore, the resultant interpretation ends up being far more significant, far more satisfying, and far more edifying (at least a hundred times more significant, more satisfying, and more edifying – in my opinion) than the interpretation that puts the emphasis on the scientific details of creation that God supposedly revealed in these chapters (especially in Genesis chapter 1). We will discuss the scientific content of Genesis chapter 1 later in the Introduction.

Even as a young Christian, before I had done much study of these chapters, I saw a strong symbolic/spiritual component for the *darkness* spoken of in Gen. 1:2,⁴ with darkness symbolizing sin, Satan and his kingdom, and the consequences of sin, including death and every form of chaos. After further study I see even more clearly this

⁴ It seems clear that literal, natural darkness was included too, but the symbolic component of the darkness is the most important component by far. At least some of the Christian scholars who hold the gap view agree that there is an important symbolic component of the darkness of Gen. 1:2, as do some of the scholars who believe (as I do) that Gen. 1:1 speaks of God’s creation starting with the earth in the desolate state pictured in Gen. 1:2. I included a lengthy excerpt from Allen P. Ross (*Creation and Blessing*) in Extended Note B; what he says on this topic is the best I have seen.

strong symbolic/spiritual component for the darkness mentioned in Genesis chapter 1, especially in Gen. 1:2. Similarly, there is a strong symbolic component for the *light* of Genesis chapter 1, especially for Gen. 1:3, 4, with light symbolizing God, righteousness, truth, divine order, life (especially spiritual life), and blessings (these good things all come from God). The fact that the sun isn't created until the fourth day, according to this creation account, helps confirm that there is a strong symbolic/spiritual component for the *darkness* and *light* of Gen. 1:2-5.

As part of this study, I looked at the symbolic use of the words *light* and *darkness* throughout the Bible. I found that these words are used in a symbolic sense even more often than I expected. Extended Note D of this paper is an eleven-page study titled "The Symbolic Use of the Words *Light*, *Darkness*, *Night*, and *Day* in the Bible." As I demonstrate there, far more often than not the words light and darkness are used in a symbolic sense in both the Old and New Testaments.

I also spent some profitable time studying the Hebrew verb *badal*, which is used five times in Genesis chapter 1. The fact that this particular verb was used in Genesis chapter 1 helps confirm that there is a strong symbolic/spiritual component for the *light* and *darkness* of Genesis chapter 1. Extended Note E is a six-page study titled "A Study of the Hebrew Verb *Badal*, To Separate, To Divide, To Distinguish Between, To Set Apart." The most important use of this Hebrew verb in Genesis chapter 1 is found in Gen. 1:4, "God saw that the light was good [It's quite significant that this creation account doesn't say that the *darkness* was good. If Gen. 1:2, 4 were speaking of light and darkness in a strictly literal/natural sense, it would be reasonable to call the darkness good, along with the light (I have noticed that some commentators make the point that the darkness is good, along with the light; they are thinking in terms of literal/natural darkness and light), but there is no way that the darkness can be called good when understood in a symbolic/spiritual sense.]; and God separated [*badal*] the light from the darkness [or, we could translate, "God distinguished between the light and the darkness"]."

It's quite significant, as Extended Note E shows, that *badal* is consistently used of separating (or distinguishing between) things like the holy from the unholy, and the clean from the unclean throughout the Old Testament. This verb was used thirty-six times in the Old Testament, not including the five uses found in Genesis chapter 1; it is never used of a mundane separating of indifferent things in any of those thirty-six uses.

Other Important Symbols in Genesis Chapters 1-3. The symbolic/spiritual nature of the two trees in the middle of the garden and of the serpent (who is Satan) help confirm the strong symbolic/spiritual component of the light and darkness of Genesis chapter 1 and the fact that Genesis chapters 1-3 have a strong symbolic/spiritual component. God, the light, life (spiritual life and physical/natural life) and the tree of life, and His kingdom of truth, righteousness, peace, order, and blessings all go together; Satan (the serpent), the darkness, death (spiritual death and physical death) and partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good *and evil* (which can also be called the tree of *death*), and his kingdom of sin, lies, and (God's) curses all go together.

Even as a young believer, I understood the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in a symbolic/spiritual sense. After doing this study, I'm even more convinced that this is the correct interpretation. Most commentators do not understand

the trees in a symbolic sense (but they at least agree that there is something spiritual/supernatural about the trees; some say the trees are sacramental); they do not see a symbolic/spiritual component for the light and the darkness of Genesis chapter 1; and they do not see the serpent as a symbol for Satan (but they at least agree that Satan spoke through the serpent).⁵

What it Meant for Adam and Eve to Eat of the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was for them to forsake God and the good (before their rebellion they knew only good) and to partake of evil. They partook of evil by *doing* evil and by *experiencing* the evil consequences that always come with doing evil. (Some of the consequences of sin are immediate; some are future, but they are sure to come to those who don't repent and submit to the Creator, Savior, and Judge of all men.) God had warned that if Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they would die (Gen. 2:17). Eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulted in the evil of death (with the emphasis on spiritual death, but also including physical death).

Significantly, this tree can also be called the tree of death; this tree is the evil alternative to the tree of life. Adam and Eve didn't have a lot of choices: They would either serve God from the heart in truth (in accordance with His Word) and righteousness (by His grace through faith) or they would forsake Him and His life, with the result being death. Adam and Eve forsook the *light* and partook of the *darkness* (using the words light and darkness in a symbolic/spiritual sense). They forsook God and His life and blessings and partook of death and the other curses that come with sin. They chose the wrong tree!

What it Meant/Mean for Man to Eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Life. Let's briefly discuss the tree of life of Genesis chapter 2 that was located (along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) in the middle of the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve continually partook of the life of God⁶ (to the extent that the life of God was available to them at that time⁷) as long as they walked right before Him from their hearts in obedience to His Word; the blessings were rather automatic. The only way they could stop partaking of the good fruit of the tree of life (the life of God) was for them to rebel against God and partake of the evil forbidden fruit of the tree of death (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil).

⁵ I found the writings of Henri Blocher (*In the Beginning*) to be the most helpful on the symbolic nature of the trees and the serpent. I quote from him extensively on this topic under Genesis chapters 2 and 3.

⁶ God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) is the only source of life (spiritual life and physical/natural life) and of everything else that is good. Spiritual life, which centers in a life-flowing relationship with God (by the Spirit), is obviously much more important than physical/natural life. Those who partake of God's spiritual life, even if they temporarily lose their physical life, will forever partake of God's eternal life and blessings and will ultimately receive glorified bodies (bodies designed for the heavenly dimension). *I don't believe there ever existed, or ever will exist, a physical tree that can provide the life of God; there is no such magic tree.* It could be said, however, that the cross of Christ opens the door for man to receive the life of God.

⁷ The life that Adam and Eve experienced in the garden before the fall was very far beneath what God's people will experience in the eternal glorified age to come. For one thing, they had bodies made of the dust of the earth, bodies designed for a temporary existence in the earthly, physical/natural dimension, not glorified bodies designed for living in the heavenly, fully-glorified dimension (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-52).

The last two chapters of the Bible (Revelation chapters 21, 22), which speak of the glory of the eternal state, with the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem, also speak of the tree(s) of life. It seems so clear to me that the tree(s) of life spoken of in Rev. 22:4 are symbolic. The tree(s) of life are a symbol for the life of God; the Triune God is the only source of life in the universe. In Revelation 22:1, 2 we see “a river of the water of life” flowing from the throne of God the Father and God the Son. (The *trees* are situated on both banks of the *river*; they are dependent on the *water* of this very special river.) It seems clear to me (and this is a widely accepted viewpoint) that this flowing river symbolizes the Spirit of life (the Holy Spirit), who comes to God’s people (even now, but in a much fuller sense in the eternal state) from God the Father and God the Son (on the basis of the atoning death of the Son/the Lamb of God).⁸

Throughout the Bible, water is used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit and the life of God. To partake of the fruit of the tree(s) of life, which are alongside the river of the water of life coming from the throne of God the Father and God the Son (in Rev. 22:1, 2), is a symbolic way to speak of partaking of the life of God. I believe it means the same thing in Genesis chapter 2, but the dimension of the life available to Adam and Eve was small compared with that which will be available to God’s people in the eternal, glorified state.⁹

The Serpent of Genesis Chapter 3 Is a Symbol for Satan. We’ll discuss this point in some detail under Genesis chapter 3. Here I’ll just point out that Revelation 12:9; 20:2 specifically call Satan “the serpent of old.” As I mentioned, most Christian commentators disagree with the idea that the serpent of Genesis chapter 3 is a symbol for Satan; they think that Satan was speaking through a literal serpent.

⁸ It also seems clear to me that the water flowing from the temple of God in Ezek. 47:1-12 that became a river and that had the trees (of life) on both sides of it is to be understood in a symbolic/spiritual sense for the Spirit/life of God.

⁹ Since I have learned over the years that many Christians have a hard time seeing the symbolic/spiritual nature of the tree(s) of life (and other such symbols), I’ll say a little more. By speaking of the symbolic/spiritual nature of the tree(s) of life, we are not at all denying reality; we are speaking of the highest reality, the reality of the dimension of God and His Spirit.

Let’s consider Psalm 46:4, 5a (NIV), “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God [speaking of the literal city of Jerusalem], the holy place where the Most High dwells. (5) God is within her, she will not fall.” It’s clear that Psalm 46:4 isn’t speaking of a literal river of literal water. For one thing, there was/is no such river in Jerusalem. The river speaks in a symbolic/Spiritual sense of God’s presence and life (“God is within her”) by His Spirit. If the believers of Israel in Old Testament days (who weren’t born-again yet and who had experienced far less of the work of the Spirit and the life of God than we believers experience in New Testament days) could understand that there was a symbolic/Spiritual river flowing to God’s people then, we should be able to understand the symbolic river flowing to us now, and the much fuller flowing of that river (that is full of glory) in the eternal state, and the symbolic/Spiritual nature of the tree(s) of life of Genesis chapters 2 and 3, Revelation chapter 22, and Ezekiel chapter 47. We need literal water, but we need God’s Spirit and His life infinitely more, and those who dwell in the presence of God find that He provides everything else they need.

I’ll give another illustration of symbolic/Spiritual language. In John chapter 6 Christ said He was/is the “bread of life.” In 6:51 He said, “I am the living bread that came out of heaven; if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever” (or, we could say, he will partake of eternal life). To eat of this bread is symbolic for partaking of the full salvation provided in Christ Jesus by faith. In John 6:47, right in the middle of this discourse, Jesus said, “he who believes [has faith] has eternal life.” We will speak quite a bit more about symbolic/Spiritual language throughout this paper, always aiming for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

Even Though We Are Informed Throughout Genesis Chapter 1 that the Creation Was Good, We Are Also Informed that Man Had to Subdue/Conquer the Earth. The fact that God informed newly created man that he must “subdue/conquer” the earth (Gen. 1:20) serves as a strong confirmation of the fact that, even though all of God’s creative work pictured in Gen. 1:1-2:3 was *good*, there were some things on the earth that were not *good*. Behind the scenes there was/is an *evil* kingdom, a kingdom of sin, darkness, and death that is headed up by Satan, a kingdom of rebels that God permits to exist for His purposes for a season before He totally removes that kingdom through judgment. It’s important to see that Satan and his kingdom of darkness were not part of God’s creative work spoken of in Gen. 1:1-2:3.

The primary thing that Adam and Eve needed to subdue/conquer was the all-too-real potential to sin against God and join the devil in his kingdom of rebellion, darkness, and death.¹⁰ As we know, the encounter of man with Satan in the garden that is reported in Genesis chapter 3 turned out very bad; instead of *subduing/conquering*, Adam and Eve were subdued by sin, darkness, and death. Anyway, God in His mercy and grace didn’t let the story end there. His promise of Gen. 3:15 revealed that eventually man (through the ultimate Seed of the woman, the God-man) will totally subdue/conquer Satan and his kingdom of sin, darkness, and death.

The Nature of the Days of the Seven Days of Creation of Genesis 1:1-2:3. When I started this study, I hadn’t formed a strong opinion regarding the nature of the days of creation, but I didn’t think they were literal twenty-four hour days. Now I can say (but not with super-dogmatic assurance) that I agree with those who say the seven days constitute an artificial literary framework *designed by God* to yield, for one thing, an important model for Israel’s sabbath at the end of six days of work. Under Gen. 1:5, I list six reasons for not understanding the days to be literal twenty-four hour days. Extended Note F is titled, “The Use of *Day* and the *Seven Days* in the Creation Account of Genesis 1:1-2:3, Using an Artificial Literary Structure.”

If it’s true that the seven days of Gen. 1:1-2:3 constitute an artificial literary framework, there’s no basis to argue that the first six days cover a period of one hundred and forty-four hours. I don’t believe God intended to reveal how long He took in His recreation of the earth. *For the record though, this paper wouldn’t change hardly at all if the six days of Genesis chapter 1 covered one hundred and forty-four hours.*

Some (Apparent) Intended Purposes for Genesis Chapters 1-3, with the Emphasis on the Creation Account of Gen. 1:1-2:3. I am taking the liberty here to incorporate some information and confirmation gained from other parts of the Bible; God never intended that we would be able to fully or adequately understand Genesis chapters 1-3 in isolation from the rest of the Bible.

One of the most important purposes for the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 was to teach that God is the Creator of all that exists, including every being; He and He alone

¹⁰ Before the fall man hardly needed to subdue/conquer the animal kingdom. Genesis 1:30 (cf. Gen. 2:19, 20; Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25) seems to indicate that the animals, at that time, were no threat to Adam, or even to one another, in that they were vegetarians. And the ground, at that time, did not need to be subdued; it yielded bountiful produce with minimal effort (or less). So too, Adam and Eve had no problems with things like violent weather, droughts, floods, or plagues before the fall.

is God (which includes His being Judge), and He alone is to be worshipped. One reason this revelation was so important in the ancient world was that all of the peoples that Israel interacted with believed in and worshipped many gods, including the sun, moon, and stars, etc. that were thought to be gods. Genesis 1:1-2:3 showed that the sun, moon, and stars, etc. were created by God; we must worship the Creator, not the beings and things created by Him.

The people of ancient Israel were tempted to worship the gods of the nations, and all too often many of them did. In our day the nations (the world) don't typically believe in literal gods, but the end result is similar because people (in pride and unbelief) worship the "gods" of our age, for example, false religion and the occult, false science (science that denies God), money, sex, intellect, fame, sports, and hobbies. Satan and his evil kingdom of darkness (which includes the fallen angels and demons) was/is behind the false "gods" of the nations of the ancient world and of our modern world.

Another important purpose for Gen. 1:1-2:3 was to teach that our world was designed and created (recreated) especially for man and that man, who was created in the image of God, was created to rule on the earth, under God, and in faithfulness to Him. It was of crucial importance for God to reveal to all who had/have ears to hear about His work of creating, about the existence and work of Satan and his evil kingdom of darkness and death, about the fall of Adam and Eve and the consequences of the fall, about salvation and what He requires of man, and some insight regarding His plans to eternally save those who submit to Him in faith and to remove Satan and all who continue to follow him in rebellion against God.

I have already spoken of the importance of seeing that the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 started with the earth being in a chaotic, desolate state, a state of darkness that had resulted from God's judgment of a rebellion led by Satan that involved the earth. This is important information, very important information. For one thing, it helps us understand Satan and his evil kingdom of sin, darkness, and spiritual death.¹¹ Genesis chapters 1-3 demonstrate that after the rebellion and fall of Satan and the rebellion and fall of man, God is still God; He is in sovereign control of the universe; He limits what He permits the devil and evil men to do. He permits Satan to tempt His people, but He always provides grace sufficient for them to be victorious over temptation. There was/is no excuse for the sin of Adam and Eve, or for the sin of Christians.

I have also spoken of the importance of seeing the strong symbolic/spiritual component for the *light* and *darkness* in this creation account (Gen. 1:1-2:3) and for the strong emphasis on the need to separate, and to keep separate, the *light* from the *darkness*. The *darkness* symbolizes Satan and his kingdom of *evil* that exists in the

¹¹ Bible-believing Christians who reject the idea that Gen. 1:1, 2 have anything to do with the fall of Satan must at least agree that Satan exists; that he was an evil, fallen being who hated God and man *before* he tempted Eve in Genesis chapter 3; that he was created good, but that he rebelled against God through pride and was judged (judged in a preliminary sense; his final judgment will not take place until the end of this age when God casts him into the lake of fire); and that he heads up an evil kingdom of darkness and spiritual death on the earth (not that his presence and activities are limited to the earth; he and his angels have access to heavenly places).

The rebellion and judgment of an earlier (before Gen. 1:1) kingdom on the earth offers the best explanation I know of for the existence of the large number of demons on the earth: Apparently they are the disembodied spirits of beings (not human beings) that were involved with Satan in that earlier rebellion and judgment.

background (cf., e.g., Col. 1:13). The darkness mentioned in Gen. 1:2 already existed when God's creative work spoken of in Gen. 1:1-2:3 began; it was not part of that creative work, which was all pronounced *good*.

I don't believe God purposed in the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 to reveal the time that expired from Gen. 1:1 to 2:3. (And, much more importantly, He has not revealed to us how long before the recreation of the earth the angelic kingdom was created or the earth was created, or when Satan and his followers fell. The Scriptures don't tell us when the universe or the earth were created, but the most common scientific viewpoint is that the universe started about 14 billion years ago, and the earth about 4.6 billion years ago.) For one thing, as I mentioned, it doesn't seem that God intended the seven days of creation to be understood as literal twenty-four hour days. Also, even if Gen. 1:1 did speak of God's initial creation of everything out of nothing (as many think), there still would be an unknown gap of time between the creation of Gen. 1:1 and the time the first day began when God said "Let there be light" in Gen. 1:3.¹²

Here's an important point—I don't believe God purposed to reveal much scientific information in the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3.¹³ As we will discuss in some detail in this paper, it seems that God accommodated the scientific details of this account to the scientific viewpoints of the ancient world.¹⁴ It seems that in our day when most Christians (including both young-earth and old-earth creationists) discuss Genesis chapter 1 they spend most of their time and energy arguing (and sometimes arguing on

¹² For those who believe that Gen. 1:1 speaks of the absolute beginning of God's creation (I'm quite sure that it doesn't), there still remains a gap of time (it could be argued that it is a very small gap of time) between Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:3 since the morning of the first day of creation begins with the light that came when God said, "Let there be light." The time that expired from Gen. 1:1 to the end of the seventh day would, therefore, be more than seven literal twenty-four hour days, even if you took the days as literal twenty-four hour days.

I'll give an example of an early Christian writer, Caedmon, who saw a substantial gap between Gen. 1:1, 2 and Gen. 1:3. He was a Christian poet in England in the middle of the seventh century. I learned about him from Arthur C. Custance and Weston W. Fields, who are both quoted in Extended Note A. I obtained the book that contains the relevant writings of Caedmon through the InterLibrary Loan (*Genesis A*, translated from the Old English by L. Mason, Vol. XLVIII of the Yale Studies in English series, A. S. Cook, editor, pages 1-3).

In Caedmon's view God had created the heavenly kingdom (Gen. 1:1, 2), which included the angels and the earth, but the earth remained desolate, dark, idle, and useless for a lengthy period, until God had need of it. I'll quote part of what he says regarding the angelic hosts. "These angelic hosts were wont to feel joy and rapture, transcendent bliss, in the presence of their Creator: their beatitude was measureless. Glorious ministers magnified their Lord, spoke his praise with zeal, lauded the Master of their being, and were excellently happy in the majesty of God. They had no knowledge of working evil or wickedness, but dwelt in innocence forever with their Lord: from the beginning [from the time of their creation] they wrought in heaven nothing but righteousness and truth, until a Prince of angels through pride strayed into sin..." (page 1). Caedmon goes on to speak of God's banishing the rebels from heaven and of His preparing the earth for man and creating man (as pictured in Gen. 1:3-2:3) with the purpose of (ultimately) letting man occupy the "noble seats and glory-crowned abodes which the haughty rebels had left vacant, high in heaven" (page 3).

¹³ He did reveal some "scientific" details, the fact that He created our universe, for example, and that He created man (male and female) in His image, but such information is more *theological* than *scientific*. I'm not suggesting, of course, that God doesn't care about getting science right; He is the God of truth; but scientific details are far less important than issues like eternal salvation and eternal damnation.

¹⁴ See under Genesis chapter 1 and see Extended Note H, "The Bible and Science." Extended Note G is also relevant to this topic, "Galileo's Condemnation and the Interpretation of Scripture."

a very intense level, even questioning in some cases the faithfulness of the Christians who don't agree with their interpretation of this chapter) about scientific details, details that God supposedly revealed in this chapter, details that must perfectly correlate with our modern scientific viewpoints, at least where the modern scientific viewpoints are (in their opinion) accurate.¹⁵ This widespread viewpoint regarding the scientific content of Gen. 1:1-2:3 is leading to much confusion and intense strife in the body of Christ. I believe most of this effort amounts to trying to find revelation of scientific details that God didn't include in this creation account.

The prime example of God's accommodating scientific details to the ancient viewpoint is the *earth-centered* viewpoint reflected in Genesis chapter 1 (and throughout the Bible). The earth is pictured (spoken of as) being unmovable, with the sun, moon, and stars rotating about it on a daily basis. Genesis chapter 1 also speaks of the sun, moon, and stars being created after the earth.¹⁶

If God's revelation through Moses (or other spokesmen) would have challenged universally held scientific viewpoints (like the earth-centered viewpoint), it would have been terribly confusing to those who read/heard it, and it would have seriously detracted from His purpose(s) for this creation account. From the days of Moses, about thirty-four hundred years ago (and in the days before Moses), until a few hundred years ago, almost all men (Jews, pagans, and Christians alike) have held the earth-centered viewpoint, and they would not have been able to identify at all with a sun-centered viewpoint, where the earth not only rotates around the sun on a yearly basis but also rotates daily on its axis. God's purposes for this creation account were far more important (infinitely more important) than for man to learn scientific details about our world through God's special revelation (in the Bible).

Some insist that God did not accommodate these scientific details to the ancient viewpoint and that such accommodation would constitute error in the Bible. I don't believe that this accommodation constitutes error, but I agree that the idea of accommodation can be a slippery slope and that we must be very careful how we use it. (These things are discussed in this paper, especially in Extended Note H, "The Bible and Science.")

When Was Adam Created? The genealogies of Genesis chapter 5 (which go from the creation of Adam to the birth of the sons of Noah) and of Genesis chapter 11 (which go from Shem's, a son of Noah, giving birth to Arpachshad two years after the flood to the

¹⁵ The old-earth creationists tend to think modern science is right in most of what it says relevant to Genesis chapter 1 (excluding, for one thing, the modern scientific views regarding the origin of life and evolution of man). The young-earth creationists think modern science is mostly wrong in what it says relevant to Genesis chapter 1, very much including the age of the universe and earth.

¹⁶ Some argue that Genesis chapter 1 doesn't speak of the sun, moon, and stars being created after the earth, but (as we discuss in this paper) I believe they are wrong. Few scientists would agree that the earth was created before the sun or before most of the other stars. Scientists can be wrong, and often are wrong, but I assume they are right when they say that the earth was not here before the sun and (most of the) stars.

Another apparent example of God's accommodating scientific details to the ancient viewpoint is the solid firmament spoken of several times in Genesis chapter 1, which God created on the second day of creation, above which He placed the large amounts of excess water that He removed from the earth on the second day (see Gen. 1:2, 6, 7). Some argue that Genesis chapter 1 doesn't speak of a solid firmament, but (as we discuss in some detail in this paper) I believe they are wrong.

birth of Abraham and his two brothers) show that (if there were no gaps in these genealogies) there were about two thousand years from the creation of Adam to the birth of Abraham (more exactly 1,946 years). We know that Abraham was born about 2000 BC. These numbers would date the creation of Adam about 4000 BC (about six thousand years ago), and they would date Noah's flood at about 2300 BC, that is *if* there were no gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and/or 11. A large number of Christian scholars are convinced that these genealogies must be incomplete. There are several compelling reasons for believing that Adam must have been created thousands of years before 4000 BC and that Noah's flood must have taken place thousands of years before 2300 BC.¹⁷ I don't have all the answers, but I believe the creation of Adam was at least ten thousand years ago, and it could have been twenty or thirty thousand years ago, or even forty to sixty thousand years ago.

When Were the Universe and Earth Created? (See footnote 17 for a start.) Strong controversy erupts here. Young-earth creationists insist that God initiated His creation of the universe five twenty-four hour days before He created Adam on the sixth day.¹⁸ They are basing this viewpoint on Genesis chapter 1. I very much appreciate the fact that young-earth creationists are trying to be faithful to God and the Bible and the fact that they have taken a strong stand against the godless evolution that reigns in so much of the world in our day; for one place, it reigns in our schools (grades 1-12 and the universities).

¹⁷ See Extended Note I, "When Was Adam Created?" Some young-earth creationists believe there are gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. Other young-earth creationists admit the possibility of gaps in the genealogies of Genesis chapters 5 and 11. Henry Morris, for example, a leader among the young-earth creationists, acknowledges the possibility that gaps in the genealogies could push the date for the creation as far back as 10,000 BC (twelve thousand years ago) at the max (*The Genesis Record* [Baker, 1976], page 45). Some young-earth creationists opt for a date ten thousand to tens of thousands of years before 10,000 BC for the creation of Adam (see, for example, John J. Davis, who is quoted in Extended Note I).

Most of the young-earth creationists that I know about argue for the creation of the universe, earth, and of Adam about 6,000 years ago. They are basing this opinion (typically they are taking a dogmatic stand for this interpretation of the Bible) on three assumptions, all of which are wrong, in my opinion. (It is significant that if they are wrong in even one of these three assumptions their date of 6,000 years is wrong. And, as I said, I believe they are wrong on all three assumptions.) They are assuming that there were no substantial gaps between the time God began to create the universe (they say this creation began at Gen. 1:1) and the time the first day of Genesis chapter 1 began; they are assuming that the days of Genesis 1:1-2:3 are literal twenty-four hour days; and they are assuming that there are no gaps in the genealogies of Genesis chapter 5 or 11. The first two assumptions have nothing to do with dating the creation of Adam, but they have everything to do with dating when God began to create the universe.

¹⁸ Henry Morris, for example (*Genesis Record*, page 45) says, "As far as the creation of the universe is concerned, this took place five days earlier than the creation of man. That these were literal days, not ages of indefinite duration corresponding to the supposed geological ages, will be shown in the next chapter. That there is no gap in time of any significance before the six days of creation will be shown in the next section of this chapter." Morris deals with, and rejects, the "gap theory" in his following section.

Some young-earth creationists acknowledge that a very small amount of time could have passed between the time God began His work of creation and the time the first day of Genesis chapter 1 began. I'm convinced there was a substantial gap of time.

Based on what I have read and heard, I have to agree with those who say the young-earth creationists are unintentionally proving to be a major ally of those who want to see evolution (to the exclusion of creationism) taught in our schools. By insisting that we must believe that God created the universe and earth six thousand years ago (or close to that), they tend to close the ears of many who desperately need to hear the important things they are saying (centering in the fact that God, the God of the Bible, is the Creator of our world and of man—we didn't get here by evolution—and He is the only Savior and Judge, before whom all men will ultimately stand).

If the young-earth creationists were right about the universe and earth's being created six thousand years ago, or so (if that is what God really intended to teach in Genesis chapters 1, 5, and 11), then Christians would have to hold that viewpoint, even if it is considered clearly wrong (many say it's ridiculous) by most scientists (including many Christian scientists) and many Christian scholars (including many evangelicals). The major problem with their position, from my point of view, is that there is very little chance (essentially no chance) that they are right about the age of the universe and the earth. It seems to me that the scientific evidence against their viewpoint is overwhelming already, and I assume it will continue to get stronger as the evidence keeps coming in through scientific research.

The Roman Catholic Church had a stronger scriptural basis to deny the sun-centered viewpoint of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo than the young-earth creationists have for insisting that the universe and earth were created six thousand years ago, or so. See Extended Note G, "Galileo's Condemnation and the Interpretation of Scripture." As the scientific evidence for the sun-centered viewpoint continued to build it eventually became obvious that the Roman Catholic Church was wrong in the interpretation of the Bible they were so sure of when they condemned Galileo. It is also significant that the Roman Catholic Church was defending the viewpoint that the scientific, secular/pagan, and Christian world had always believed. Most of the scientists of that day agreed with the Roman Catholic Church, against Galileo, and some of them stirred up opposition in the Roman Catholic Church against him. By contrast, most of the scientists of our day (including many Christians) strongly disagree with the young-earth creationists.

It is true, of course, that if the young-earth creationists could prove that the earth is only six thousand years old, that fact, in itself, would destroy the false theory of godless evolution, but if the earth is older (I assume that it is billions of years old) that fact doesn't begin to validate godless evolution, not at all. Man would not have evolved on the earth even if the earth had existed hundreds of billions of years, or more. The more scientists learn about living cells and how complicated those cells and the molecules that make up those cells are (including dna), with all of the complicated things that have to interact in just the right way for the cell to function, the more it seems obvious that such cells would not have evolved in multiplied billions of years, much less monkeys, or men (who are on a totally different level than monkeys in that they have been created in the image of God). See Extended Note K, "Intelligent Design, Not Evolution." That lengthy Extended Note, some forty pages, consists mostly of excerpts from leaders of the Intelligent Design movement. That movement is having some success refuting godless evolution on a scientific basis, and it looks like they will have a lot more success in the near future. Refuting godless evolution is a far different thing though than helping men see their need to submit to God and His Word.

My primary goal for this paper was to present an accurate, relevant, verse-by-verse explanation of Genesis chapters 1-3. I also wanted to address in as constructive a way as possible the young-earth controversy that has become so divisive in segments of the body of Christ; many are saying (even insisting) that Christians are unfaithful to God and the Bible if they don't agree with the young-earth date for the universe and the earth. We desperately need the truth, the balanced truth in every area, including the interpretation of Genesis chapters 1-3. We have no need to fear the truth; it will stand! All real truth, including scientific truth, is God's truth!

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this paper were taken from the 1995 edition of the NASB.

May God's (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit's) will be accomplished through this paper and His name be glorified in the Body of Christ!

GENESIS CHAPTER 1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [I'll quote a few verses from the New Testament that deal with God's work of creation in the beginning and make a few comments. John 1:1-3: "In the beginning [before any creating had taken place] was the Word [the *Logos*; the Son of God; He is an uncreated Being; if He had been created, He wouldn't be deity (God) with the Father and the Spirit], and the Word was with God [The *Logos* "was with" God the Father], and the Word was God [These last words of John 1:1 confirm, along with many other verses in the Bible, that God the Son is deity with God the Father]. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." The "all things [that] came into being through Him" clearly includes all the other beings in the universe, whether cherubim, seraphim, archangels, angels, men, demons, etc. Colossians 1:16 confirms this last point, "For by Him [God the Son] all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him." Included with the "all things [that] were created [by Him]" is physical matter. God created all things *out of nothing*: Hebrews 11:3 says, "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." We can understand these things "by faith" because God has revealed them to us in His Word.

The most common interpretation for these words of Gen. 1:1 among Christians has always been that they speak of God's original creation of all things, including matter, out of nothing in the absolute beginning of His work of creating.¹⁹ (Many commentators of our day disagree with this interpretation, but I suppose it still is the most common

¹⁹ The Hebrew verb behind *create* here in Gen. 1:1 (and in Gen. 1:21, 27; 2:3, 4; 5:1, 2; Ezek. 28:12, 15; and often) is *bara*. This verb doesn't require us to think of creation out of nothing (as you often hear it said). It is frequently used for the creation of man (e.g., Gen. 1:27; 5:1, 2; Deut. 4:32; and Psalm 89:47), and Gen. 2:7 shows that God formed man (referring to his physical body) "of dust from the ground" that already existed. The verb is used in Psalm 51:10, where David asked God to *create* in him a clean heart. The verb is used in Isa. 45:7 of God's *creating* "calamity," speaking of His work of judging. Furthermore, there is nothing about the word "beginning" in Gen. 1:1 that requires us to think of the *absolute* beginning. The *beginning* in view must be discerned from the context (cf., e.g., Isa. 41:26; Jer. 17:12).

I'll quote part of what David Atkinson says regarding God's creative work and *bara* (*Message of Genesis 1-11* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1990], pages 21, 22). "It is important to see that what God creates is something distinct from himself. This chapter has no place for *pantheism* – the idea that 'God' is another name for 'everything.' It is true that God indwells the world, and the world has its being 'in God,' but God remains God, and in transcendent distinction from what he has made.

It is important also to notice that elsewhere in the Bible, the word *bara* is used in the context of salvation. The unique word for God's creative activity is much more commonly used of his liberating and saving actions in history. [In a footnote he says, "cf. Isa. 43:1ff." The Hebrew verb *bara* is used in Isa. 43:1, 7, and 15; it is used in those verses of His *creative* work of redeeming, saving, and ultimately glorifying His people, the people of true Israel.] The God who makes things is the God who also makes things new. [Atkinson has a footnote, "Isa. 43:19."] The God who we see in Genesis 1 is the Creator of all, we learn from a broader biblical picture is also the redeemer, sustainer, re-creator, and the one who brings all things to completion. God's creative activity in history is not only the preservation of what he has made; it is a continuous, creative engagement with his world, leading it forward to its future glory. [He has a footnote, "Cf., e.g., Rom. 8:18-22; Eph. 1:10; Rev. 21:4; Matt. 19:28."]. Atkinson believes, by the way, that Gen. 1:1 speaks of God's creating everything out of nothing.

view among Christians.) This is the viewpoint of those who hold the *gap view* of Gen. 1:1, 2. (The gap view is discussed in Extended Note A of this paper. I suggest that you read that Extended Note now if you haven't already read it.) I have always agreed with what the gap view teaches regarding verse 2, but I never was fully satisfied with that view's interpretation of verse 1, especially the transition from verse 1 to verse 2. When I was first confronted (some ten to fifteen years ago) with the viewpoint that Gen. 1:1 does not refer to God's original creation of all things out of nothing in the *absolute* beginning of creation, but to His creation of our present world (you could call it a recreation), starting with the earth in the desolate state pictured in verse 2, it sounded quite plausible—now I'm quite convinced that is the correct viewpoint. For some excerpts and discussion dealing with this viewpoint, see Extended Note B. I recommend that you read that Extended Note now if you haven't already read it; that Extended Note deals for the most part with the interpretation of Gen. 1:1, 2. For one thing, several important points regarding the interpretation of Gen. 1:1, 2 are included there that are not repeated here.] **(2) The earth** [I prefer "Now the earth" NIV] **was formless and void** [The Hebrew noun behind "formless" is *tohu*, and behind "void" is *bohu*.²⁰ From my point of view, rightly discerning the intended meaning (God's intended meaning) for these two Hebrew nouns is crucial for the correct interpretation of this verse and the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3. I believe that verse 2 pictures the desolate state of the earth after God judged a rebellion led by Satan. The margin of the NASB has, "or, a waste and emptiness." The NIV has, "without form and empty"; the *Amplified Bible* has, "without form and an empty waste." The BDB Hebrew Lexicon gives "formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness" as the meaning of *tohu*. BDB translates *tohu* as *chaos* for Isa. 24:10²¹: "*city of chaos* (of ruined city)"; quite a few translations have "city of chaos."

Bohu is only used two other places in the Old Testament; in both verses it is combined with *tohu*, as it is here in Gen. 1:2: Isa. 34:11²² and Jer. 4:23.²³ Both of these verses use this combination of Hebrew nouns to speak of the chaos and emptiness that result from God's judgments, which confirms that this is a reasonable way to understand the meaning here in Gen. 1:2. And there are quite a few other substantial reasons to favor this interpretation for *tohu* and *bohu* here in Gen. 1:2, as discussed throughout this study

²⁰ See what Barnhouse says on the meaning of these two words in Extended Note A of this paper.

²¹ Isaiah chapter 24 prophesies regarding God's end-time judgment of the world. Apparently *chaos* is what is left of the city after God's judgment. Isaiah chapter 24 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my paper on Isaiah dated August 2000.

²² Isaiah chapter 34 prophesies regarding God's end-time judgment of "Edom," with Edom being a symbol for the world. God's end-time judgment of the world is a very common theme in the book of Isaiah (see my paper mentioned in the preceding footnote). I'll quote Isa. 34:11, "But pelican and hedgehog will possess it ["It" refers to Edom after being judged by God], And owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line of desolation [The Hebrew behind "desolation" is *tohu*. The NIV translates "chaos" here.] And the plumb line of emptiness [The Hebrew behind "emptiness" is *bohu*. The NIV translates "desolation" here.]

²³ Jeremiah 4:23 is in a context dealing with God's intense judgment of Judah through the Babylonians. It spoke of the devastation that would result from this judgment in very intense terms, "I looked on the earth, and behold, *it was* formless and void [The Hebrew behind "formless and void" is *tohu* and *bohu*. In the margin the NASB has a cross-reference to Gen. 1:2, and it offers another translation, "a waste and emptiness." The last words of this verse could be translated, "and behold, chaos and emptiness."]; And to the heavens, and they had no light [Compare the *darkness* mentioned in Gen. 1:2.]. It seems clear that Jer. 4:23 builds on Gen. 1:2.

of Genesis chapter 1 (including the Extended Notes), very much including the discussion of the rest of this verse and of verse 3 regarding the meaning of *darkness* and *light* and the discussion regarding the *separation* of the *light* (which was pronounced “good” in Gen. 1:4) from the *darkness*., **and darkness** [The “darkness” here is strongly contrasted with the “light” spoken of in verses 3-5; for one thing, darkness is the absence of light. We are undoubtedly supposed to think of literal physical darkness and light in these verses, but I believe the emphasis here (as it very often is for these words throughout the Bible) is on light and darkness as symbols (or we could say light and darkness in a spiritual sense). I suggest you now read Extended Note D, “The Symbolic Use of the Words *Light*, *Darkness*, *Night*, and *Day* in the Bible.” Seeing the strong symbolic/spiritual component of the light and darkness of these verses is very important to the proper interpretation of Gen. 1:1-2:3. God is light and the only source of light; taking light in the full biblical sense, it includes life (very much including spiritual life), truth, righteousness, holiness, divine order, and the blessings that accompany dwelling in the light, including peace and health. Darkness is associated with sin, death (spiritual death and physical death), Satan and his kingdom, chaos, and the judgments and curses that come from God because of sin. Here in Gen. 1:2, “darkness” apparently includes the symbolic/spiritual ideas of the absence of God’s life, of His divine order, and of His blessings that had resulted from a very intense judgment against sin, along with the lack of physical (natural) light. Physical (natural) light ultimately comes from God too.²⁴ The fact that the sun hasn’t been created yet in the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 helps confirm that the light and darkness of Gen. 1:2-5 have a strong symbolic component. God Himself probably is the source of the light of Gen. 1:3, even as He is the source of the light of new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

Genesis 1:3 says, “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” Genesis 1:4 goes on to say that “God separated the light from the darkness [or, distinguished

²⁴ With the typical worldview of our day, we (even many/most Christians) tend to think of the sun rising, sending its rays upon the earth, and setting according to natural, scientific law, and that God has little or nothing to do with it. But the worldview of the ancient world was different. Ancient Israel didn’t take the rays from the sun for granted. (Neither did the other peoples who lived in the ancient world.) For them, physical, natural light (and the rain, etc.) came from God, as did the much-more-important spiritual light: God created the sun; He keeps it shining and giving off light and energy; He keeps it rotating around the earth on a daily basis; etc.

I’ll quote part of what John H. Walton says regarding this issue under the subheading “The entire creation–nature–history continuum is totally dependent on God” (*Genesis* [Zondervan, 2001], page 50). “There was nothing that Israelites would have referred to as natural laws. . . . the identification of something that we might classify as natural cause and effect in no way precluded or operated independently from God’s cause and effect. . . . nothing in the earthly realm happened independently of the heavenly realm.

Our modern ‘dilemma’ of trying to discern what happens naturally and what is a result of God’s intervention would seem to ancient Israelites, at best, ludicrous and, at worst, heretical. . . .

. . . In most of the ancient world [the pagan world] the admixture of what we call natural and supernatural was achieved by infusing nature with the divine. Consequently, the gods were seen to be inherent in nature, manifested in the elements and, at least in the early periods, of one and the same essence with them. Israel did not attribute divine attributes to nature in this way. The forces and elements of nature are Yahweh’s minions, not his essence. This distinction is defined in the creation narratives and clearly seen when the Israelite creation text is compared with those of the ancient Near East. . . .” (pages 50, 51).

between the light and the darkness].” Physical *light* and *darkness* are undoubtedly included in the light and darkness mentioned in 1:4, but the symbolic/spiritual component of that light and darkness is far more important than the physical component. Another confirmation of this fact is that Gen. 1:4 says, “God saw that the light was good,” whereas this creation account doesn’t say that the darkness was good. I don’t believe there would have been any problem saying that physical darkness was good, but since there is some emphasis on symbolic/spiritual darkness here, there was no way it could be said that the darkness was good.

There is some emphasis in Gen. 1:2-19 on God’s creative work of *separating* things that must be separated, and kept separate, as we’ll see. The fact that light must be separated, and kept separate, from darkness for God’s people is a dominant message of the Bible, as demonstrated in Extended Note D. Other uses in the Old Testament for the Hebrew verb (*badal*), the verb that was translated “separated” in 1:4 (and is also used in Gen. 1:6, 7, 14, and 18), confirm that this *separation* is a very important issue. Separating the light from the darkness includes keeping the things of God (very much including His people) holy and separate from sin and all the things associated with sin and Satan and his kingdom of darkness.

For man to fail to keep separate from the darkness, was for man to fail to keep separate from evil. God warned man that he must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Before Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit of that tree, through the devil’s deceiving temptations and in rebellion against God and His Word, they knew only *good*. After they ate of the forbidden fruit, they began to know evil too. They came to know evil by doing evil (sinning) and by experiencing the evil consequences/penalties that come with sin. The first major penalty for sin was death. Spiritual death came immediately; the physical death process was set in motion. To say the same thing in different words, Adam and Eve failed to keep separate from the darkness, and they began to know/experience the darkness.

The Hebrew verb *badal* was used 41 times in the Old Testament. In Extended Note E, I list and quote essentially every one of the other 36 uses of this verb that are not found in Genesis chapter 1. I strongly suggest you read that Extended Note now. (Also read Extended Note D if you haven’t read it yet.) It’s very important for this study, and that study is interesting and important in its own right. For one thing, *separation* is closely associated with the biblical concept of *holiness* (being set apart from everything depraved, corrupt, unclean, and sinful for God and the things of God), and the concept of holiness is certainly one of the most important concepts in the Bible.

It’s quite significant that the most common use of *badal* in those verses (some 21 of the 36 uses) is of the separating, dividing, distinguishing between that which is righteous, holy, and/or clean and that which is sinful, defiled, and/or unclean. Furthermore, in essentially every one of the other uses of *badal* in the Old Testament (beyond the 21 uses just mentioned) this verb is used of setting apart people (especially the priests and Levites) or places for God. *Badal* was apparently never used in the Old Testament—and that includes the 5 uses in Genesis chapter 1—for the separating of things that are indifferent.

A Discussion Regarding Symbolic/Spiritual Language in the Bible

If we want to understand the Scriptures, it is extremely important for us to rightly discern symbolic/spiritual language, and it isn't always easy, as the divisions in the body of Christ regarding the interpretation of many passages of Scripture (including Genesis chapters 1-3 and the book of Revelation) demonstrate. Some miss the balance by not recognizing language that is symbolic. Some have the idea that if it is possible to take a passage literally, then it should be understood that way. I don't believe that rule is adequate. Our goal must be to interpret each passage the way intended by the author/Author.²⁵

I'll quote a few sentences from C. John Collins that deal with this issue.²⁶ "The first principle of Bible interpretation is, 'take the text on its own terms': that is, we adjust ourselves to the author's perspective, and try to discern what questions they were answering, and what understanding and conventions they shared with their addressees. We may not assume that they are necessarily answering our questions or following our conventions." In a footnote Collins says, "Surely stating the principle this way is far superior to the misleading 'take it literally unless context requires otherwise,' which seems to be the popular way of describing the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. We may not pre-judge what literary types and forms God 'must' use in order to communicate with us; and even in straight prose we make room for idioms, hyperbole, round numbers, anthropomorphisms, statement of a general principle without stopping to discuss nuances and exceptions, and other rhetorical devices. 'The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is— what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used' (C. S. Lewis, *Preface to Paradise Lost*, 1); as for judging, so also for interpreting."

Some miss the all-important balanced truth in the other direction; they find symbolic language where it was not intended by the author/Author. A prime example (from my point of view), a very important example, is the interpretation of Revelation chapter 20. Instead of seeing a literal millennium on the earth at the end of this age, they take the language as symbolic. I don't believe they have an adequate basis for taking that chapter as symbolic; their interpretations are very strained. Such interpreters typically find very few literal prophecies in the Bible dealing with what will come to pass at the end of this age; they mostly find only what they are looking for: general truths and principles that apply to this entire age.

I acknowledge that at first reading the fact that the darkness and light spoken of in Gen. 1:2-5 have a strong symbolic component may not necessarily jump out at you. (You could at least make sense of the passage thinking only of physical darkness and light.²⁷) The more you get into the details of Gen. 1:1-2:3, however, and the more you

²⁵ One reason that I added the word "Author," referring to God, is that there are many passages in the Bible that contain revelation, sometimes total revelation, where the human "author" was just passing on what God gave him to pass on. In such cases the author had no input as to whether to use symbolic language, or not.

²⁶ "How Old Is the Earth?" *Presbyterion* 20/2 (1994), page 112.

²⁷ It's very easy for most interpreters to think only of literal darkness and light because they (wrongly) approach Genesis chapter 1 expecting and looking for God's revelation of physical/natural scientific details regarding His creation of the universe. Throughout this paper I try to show that that approach is

incorporate what you learn as you continue with Genesis and the rest of the Bible, the more the strong symbolic component of the darkness and light spoken of in Gen. 1:2-5 begins to assert itself. Many passages in the Bible were written in a way that they could not be understood, or fully understood, without the light contained in other parts of the Bible. Sometimes God's people had to wait for subsequent revelation to understand, or fully understand, what was written. Furthermore, we are very dependent on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to understand God's Word.

As we continue with Genesis chapters 1-3, we find (I believe) some heavy-duty symbolic language. The three prime examples are the two very special trees in the middle of the garden (the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," which can also be called "the tree of death," and the "tree of life") and the "serpent" (a symbol for Satan). Many have pointed out that the first three chapters of the Bible have much in common with the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation chapters 21, 22.²⁸ Those chapters from the book of Revelation, which are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in some detail in my paper dated November 1998, are full of symbolic language, including (but not at all limited to) the symbolic numbers for the dimensions of new Jerusalem and the wall of that city; the "river of the water of life, clear a crystal" flowing from the throne of God the Father and God the Son (the "river of the water of life" surely serves as a symbol for the Spirit of life); and the "tree[s] of life" along the banks of this "river," which is the equivalent of the "tree of life" spoken of in Gen. 2:9; 3:22, 24 and in other verses (to partake of the fruit of that tree is to partake of spiritual/eternal life).

defective. For one thing, I don't believe God chose to reveal hardly any scientific details in Genesis chapter 1. (For a start see what I said on this topic in the Introduction.)

²⁸ In some ways Revelation 21, 22 picture a return to the garden of Eden before the fall (cf., e.g., the "tree of life" [Rev. 22:2]), but Revelation chapters 21, 22 go very far beyond the state pictured in Genesis chapters 1-3. For example, Adam, even before the fall, had a body created of the elements of this world and designed for life in this world; in the eternal state our bodies will be glorified (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:45-53). The glory of the garden of Eden can hardly be compared with the exceeding glory of the eternal state pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22.

I'll quote a large part of what J. Sidlow Baxter says in a subsection titled "Genesis and the Apocalypse" when discussing the book of Genesis (*Explore the Book* [Zondervan, 1966], pages 25-27). "It is important to recognize the relationship between Genesis and the last book of Scripture. There is a correspondence between them which at once suggests itself as being both a *proof* and a *product* of the fact that the Bible is a *completed* revelation. There is no adequate understanding of either of them [Genesis or Revelation] without the other; but taken together they are mutually complete. ... In broad outline and majestic language Genesis answers the question: 'How did all begin?' ... Revelation answers the question: 'How will all issue [end]?' All that lies between them is development from the one to the other. ...

Mark the *contrasts* between the one book and the other. In Genesis we see the first paradise *closed* (3:23); in Revelation we see the new paradise *opened* (21:25). In Genesis we see *dispossession* through human sin (3:24); in Revelation we see *repossession* through Divine grace (21:24). In Genesis we see the 'curse' imposed (3:17); in Revelation we see the 'curse' removed (22:3). In Genesis we see access to the tree of life disinherited, in Adam (3:24); in Revelation we see access to the tree of life *reinhaerited*, in Christ (22:14). In Genesis we see the beginning of sorrow and death (3:16-19) [We see the beginning of sorrow and death *for man*, not the ultimate beginning of sorrow and death. Baxter, who holds the gap view of Genesis chapter 1, would agree with this detail.] ... In Genesis we see the evil triumph of the Serpent (3:13); in Revelation we see the ultimate triumph of the Lamb (20:10; 22:3). ...

... In Genesis we have the *sentence* passed on Satan; in the Apocalypse we have the sentence *executed*. In Genesis we are given the *first promise* of a coming Saviour and salvation; in the Apocalypse we see that promise in its final and glorious *fulfilment*. Genesis causes *anticipation*; the Apocalypse effects *realization*. Genesis is the *foundation* stone of the Bible; the Apocalypse is the *capstone*."

It is very important for the reader to understand that when I say Genesis chapters 1-3 and Revelation chapters 21, 22 contain quite a bit of symbolic/spiritual language I am not at all saying that these passages speak of things that are not real. (Actually, the entire book of Revelation is full of symbolic language, but probably not to the extent of the last two chapters of that book.²⁹) Genesis chapters 1-3 and Revelation chapters 21, 22 certainly deal with things that are real. The creation was real, sin and Satan are real, Adam and Eve were real, the garden of Eden was real, God's plan of salvation was real, etc., etc., and the new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem will be real. By using symbolic language these chapters are able to say more, in more powerful ways, and with fewer words than if no symbolic language had been used. When it comes to describing the new heaven and new earth of Revelation chapters 21, 22, symbolic language is especially helpful. The new earth with its new Jerusalem will be in a different dimension than the one we live in now; it will be in the heavenly, glorified dimension, a dimension that, for one thing, is beyond the physical elements of the present, temporary, physical world.

One last comment here, I certainly am not attacking Christians who don't see a symbolic component for the words *darkness* and *light* in Gen. 1:2-5. I must say, however, that I don't believe we can adequately understand the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 if we don't see this strong symbolic component. I'll be saying a lot more as we continue that will help substantiate what I have already said regarding the interpretation of Gen. 1:1-2:3.] **was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving** [I prefer "hovering" (cf. Deut. 32:11).] **over the surface of the waters.** [The "deep" here speaks of the "waters" that were covering the earth when God began His work of creation (recreation) spoken of in Gen. 1:1-2:3. At that time, according to this account, the "deep" was extra deep, covering everything on the earth, as it would again at the time of Noah's flood. A major aspect of God's work for the second day of

²⁹ One passage that especially impresses me in the book of Revelation is Revelation chapter 12, but I am extremely impressed with the entire book of Revelation. (Revelation chapter 12 is discussed in some detail in my book *The Mid-Week Rapture*. The entire book of Revelation is discussed verse-by-verse in that book or subsequent papers.) Once we understand the symbolic language of those verses (other passages in the Bible explain and confirm what the symbols mean), we can see that those verses say more about salvation, sin, the devil and his angels, the history of the people of God, the timing (mid-week) of the resurrection, rapture, and glorification of the people of God, and the conversion of the end-time remnant of Israel (with a three and one-half year period of trials for this remnant, accompanied with great blessings) than could possibly be communicated as effectively with the same number of words without using symbolic language. And symbolic/spiritual language can communicate in effective, powerful ways, as it does, for example, throughout Revelation chapter 12. For one thing, as they say, a picture can sometimes communicate more than a thousand words.

I'll give another example of symbolic language from the book of Revelation. "And I saw... a Lamb standing, as if slain [The Lamb is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ who was slain to overthrow sin and Satan and to save us. When John sees Him, He is no longer dead; He has been raised from the dead victorious over all the enemies of God; He is in heaven on the throne of God, with God the Father.] having seven horns [The number seven symbolizes perfection. John's seeing the Lamb with seven horns symbolizes that the Lamb has perfect/complete dominion and power to reign and subdue every enemy.] and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth [The seven eyes symbolize the Lamb's ability to see what is happening everywhere in the universe in every dimension by the Holy Spirit, who is referred to in a symbolic way here as "the seven Spirits of God" (cf., e.g., Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5)]." There's no way we can understand the seven horns and seven eyes in a literal sense (or the fact that the Son of God became the *Lamb* of God).

creation (Gen. 1:6-8) was to remove the large amounts of excess water from the earth. Genesis 1:7 says, “God made the expanse [firmament], and separated the waters which were below the expanse [firmament] from the waters which were above the expanse [firmament].” First He made the firmament, then He removed the large amounts of excess water from the earth and put them “above the firmament.” He couldn’t remove the large amounts of excess water and put them above the firmament until He had made the firmament.

The account of Noah’s flood (Genesis chapters 6-8) yields important information that helps us understand the picture here in Gen. 1:2-8. Before Noah’s flood, large amounts of water were stored above the firmament. At the time of the flood, “the floodgates of the sky [or, “the windows of the heavens”] were opened” (Gen. 7:11). It began to rain, and the water rose on the earth until it was fifteen cubits (some twenty-two and one-half feet) above the tops of the mountains (Gen. 7:20). Finally “the floodgates of the sky were closed” (Gen. 8:2). Genesis 7:11 informs us that the same day the floodgates of the sky were opened, “all the fountains of the great deep burst open”; Gen. 8:2 mentions the closing of the fountains of the deep along with closing the floodgates of the sky.

It seems significant that the same Hebrew verb (*badal*) that we discussed above (and which is discussed in Extended Note E), the verb that was used for God’s *separating* the light from the darkness (or, *distinguishing between* the light and the darkness) in Gen. 1:4, is also used for His separating the waters from the waters: “Then God said, ‘Let there be an expanse [firmament] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ (7) God made the expanse [firmament], and separated the waters which were below the expanse [firmament] from the waters which were above the expanse [firmament].” The separating off of these large amounts of excess water was a *good* and necessary step in preparing the earth for man. This wasn’t a mere *separating* of mundane things that were indifferent. Apparently we are supposed to understand that the excess water on the earth pictured in Gen. 1:2 had come as part of God’s judgment of the earlier Satanic rebellion that we spoke of above.

The “Spirit of God was moving [“hovering”] over the surface of the waters.” The Spirit of God was on the scene ready and waiting for God’s creative Word to be spoken. With His infinite wisdom, energy, and power, the Spirit of God will bring to pass what is spoken. “In the Old Testament the Spirit is a term for God’s outgoing energy, creative and sustaining (cf. Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30).”³⁰

Brief Discussion Regarding the More Traditional Interpretation of These Verses

I’ll quote a few sentences from Gordon J. Wenham³¹ to introduce this discussion. Wenham favors the more traditional view. On page 11 he lists four possible ways to understand Gen. 1:1 with 1:2, 3. The first two ways both start the translation of 1:1 with the words, “In the beginning when God created....”³² Regarding the third way, which I believe is the correct way, Wenham says, “Verse 1 is a main clause, summarizing all the events described in vv 2-31. It is a title to the chapter as a whole....” And regarding the fourth way, he says, “Verse 1 is a main clause describing the first act of creation [In other words,

³⁰ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), page 45.

³¹ *Genesis 1-15* (© 1987 by Word, Inc., now published by Thomas Nelson).

³² Intentionally left blank in the internet version.

God began to create, at the absolute beginning of creation.³³] ... Theologically these [four] different translations [based on the four ways to understand Gen. 1:1-3] are of great consequence, for apart from #4, the translations all presuppose the existence of chaotic preexistent matter before the work of creation [or, recreation] began.” Wenham then goes on for two pages discussing these four viewpoints. I’ll just quote half a sentence from what he says, “The traditional interpretation supposes that God first created chaos and then ordered it...” (page 13).

Before making a few comments, I’ll quote a few sentences from what Wenham says under Gen. 1:2 a few pages later. First I’ll give his translation for the first part of Gen. 1:2, “Now the earth was total chaos, and darkness covered the deep. ... This frightening disorganization is the antithesis to the order that characterized the work of creation when it was complete. Here and in Isa 34:11 and Jer 4:23 *tohu* is coupled with *bohu* ‘void’ where, as the context shows, the dreadfulness of the situation before the divine word brought order out of chaos is underlined. [Significantly, as I have pointed out, Isa. 34:11 and Jer. 4:23 both speak of chaos and emptiness that came as a result of God’s judgments.]

The same point is made in another powerful image in the next clause, ‘darkness covered the deep.’ *Choshhek* ‘darkness’ is another evocative word in Hebrew. If light symbolizes God, darkness evokes everything that is anti-God: the wicked (Prov 2:13), judgment (Exod 10:21), death (Ps 88:13). Salvation is described as bringing light to those in darkness (Isa 9:1, etc.). ... “ (pages 15, 16). [The underlining for emphasis in these two paragraphs is mine.]

My comments in this paragraph are not aimed at Wenham, but at what seems to me to be a rather overwhelming problem for those holding the more traditional view of Gen. 1:1-3 (Wenham’s view #4, which he embraces). Is it really all that obvious and reasonable to think that God, in His first step/phase of creation, would create such a frightening, dreadful, chaotic mess. I’m trying to ask a serious question, not to insult anyone. Are we really supposed to think that God initially said something like, “Let matter be created in a totally chaotic form, with total darkness (which, as Wenham says, symbolizes “everything that is anti-God.”), and let there be far-too-much water, a destructive amount of water, on the earth, with literally everything on the earth being covered by it.”

I believe the view that Gen. 1:2 describes the state of the earth after God judged an earlier rebellion is far more reasonable and far more satisfying than the more traditional view, and significantly, the more traditional view regarding God’s creation of Gen. 1:1-2:3 fails to account for the fall of Satan and the judgment that fell on him and his followers. (The more traditional view assumes that the cherubim, angels, etc. were created in Gen. 1:1; you have to strain to see their creation in that verse; I believe, in agreement with many, that they were created and fell *before* Gen. 1:1.) The creation of the cherubim, angels, etc. and the fall and judgment of Satan and his followers are extremely important for the book of Genesis (very much including chapters 1-3) and for the unfolding story of the Bible. God’s angelic court is mentioned in Genesis chapter 1 (verse 26), and Satan plays a major role in Genesis chapter 3 as a subtle, determined, already fallen enemy of God and of man.³⁴

³³ Bruce Waltke points out that the Hebrew verb translated “created” doesn’t fit the idea that God *began* to create (see under the excerpts from him in Extended Note B).

³⁴ Many details about Satan and his highly organized worldwide kingdom that extends into the heavenly places are not revealed until we get to the New Testament, but we learn quite a bit about this enemy of God and of man in the Old Testament. In Genesis chapter 6, we read of the extremely sinful exploits of

The fact that Gen. 1:28 speaks of the need for man to subdue/conquer the earth serves as a strong confirmation of the reality of the existence of Satan and his kingdom of darkness that must be subdued by man.³⁵ Satan and his kingdom of darkness were not part of the creation of Gen. 1:1-2:3, and they had no authority over man, not until man joined the devil in his rebellion against God, but their existence was/is very real and they must be subdued by man; eventually they will be totally subdued and removed by God's judgment through the Lord Jesus Christ and His people (Gen. 3:15).

If we interpret Gen. 1:2 as I believe we should, God is revealing some very important information, the kind of information that we must have to understand our world, sin, and salvation. It's typical for the Bible that God is very much more interested in teaching us about things that pertain to sin and salvation from sin (things that we couldn't know apart from His revelation) than in teaching us about far-less-important things like scientific details.

We learn a quite a bit about God's angels, and we learn a lot about Satan and his highly organized kingdom of fallen angels and demons in the Bible (especially in the New Testament), but Gen. 1:2 (with some confirmation from Ezek. 28:12-15) is unique in giving us insight into the fact that Satan apparently had a kingdom on the earth (before his rebellion) that was destroyed by God in judgment. This viewpoint is the only one I know of that offers a good explanation for where the demons (who definitely exist on the earth in extremely large numbers) came from. These things are further discussed in Extended Notes A, B, and C in this paper, and I'll say quite a bit more as we continue with Gen. 1:1-2:3 that will help confirm what I have said already.] **(3) Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.** [This is the first creative act of God mentioned in Genesis chapter 1. A large number of commentators make this point. As we discussed above, physical light was included, but the emphasis seems to fall on the symbolic/spiritual component of light here. In verse 4 we are informed that the light was good, but this is not said of the darkness, and we are informed that the light must be kept separate from the darkness. These facts serve as a strong confirmation of the symbolic/spiritual use of the words light and darkness in these verses.

Furthermore, the fact that, in this creation account, the light comes forth before the sun is created serves as a strong confirmation that the light has a strong symbolic/spiritual component. The light of Gen. 1:3-5 doesn't come from the sun (since

some of the angels; undoubtedly they were part of the angels that followed Satan in his initial rebellion against God (cf. Rev. 12:4, 7-9; 2 Pet. 2:4; and Jude 1:6, 7). (It's clear that the fall of Satan took place before he tempted Eve in Genesis chapter 3. I believe he fell and that he and his followers were judged before Gen. 1:1 and that that judgment left the earth in the desolate, chaotic state pictured in Gen. 1:2.) Satan is mentioned, using the name *Satan*, in 1 Chron. 21:1; quite a few times in Job chapters 1, 2; and in Zech. 3:1, 2. In Dan. 10:13, 20 we learn of the powerful princes of Persia and Greece who are arrayed against God and His people. Undoubtedly they were evil angels under Satan. In Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; and Psalm 106:37, we read of *demons*. In 1 Sam. 16:15, 16, 23; and 18:10, we read of *evil spirits*. In Leviticus chapter 16, which deals with the all-important sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, we learn of *Azazel*, who represents Satan, or an evil angel under him. (On *Azazel* see pages 17, 18 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.)

³⁵ I'm not suggesting that Adam and Eve knew all about Satan and his kingdom of evil before their fall, or that they knew that God would use man to subdue and overthrow that kingdom. God's revelation is progressive, but they certainly knew enough to avoid rebelling against God and being subdued by sin and Satan through eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (the tree of death).

it hasn't been created yet). I assume that God Himself is the source of this light.³⁶ He isn't dependent on the sun for light; the last two chapters of the Bible show that the light of the new heavens and new earth with its new Jerusalem will emanate from God the Father and the Lamb of God. "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:23). "And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun because the Lord God will illumine them; and they [true Israel] will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). These two verses from the book of Revelation (along with the other verses that are discussed in Extended Note D) help confirm the symbolic/spiritual component of the words *light* and *darkness* (and the words *day* and *night*) here in Genesis chapter 1.] **(4) God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.** [See under Gen. 1:2, 3. As Extended Note E shows, these last words could also be translated, "and God made a distinction between the light and the darkness." The Hebrew preposition *bayin* that means "between" is used before the Hebrew words translated "the light" and "the darkness."³⁷ The twenty-one uses of the Hebrew verb *badal* (which means to separate, divide, distinguish between, set apart) that are quoted in the first section of Extended Note E are especially relevant to the use of the Hebrew verb here in Gen. 1:4 (and in Gen. 1:6, 7, 14, and 18). The verses quoted in that first section demonstrate that the most common use for this Hebrew verb is to separate things that must be separated and kept separate (the holy from the unholy, the clean from the unclean).

Essentially every other use of this Hebrew verb in the Old Testament (it was used thirty-six times apart from the five uses found here in Genesis chapter 1, for a total of forty-one) fits into a similar category where people or places are set apart in some special way for God; many of those remaining verses deal with the setting apart of the priests and Levites. *Badal* is not used of a mundane separating of indifferent things in any of the other thirty-six uses of this verb in the Old Testament. The usage and meaning of *badal* in the Old Testament serves as a strong confirmation of the strong symbolic/spiritual component of the words *light* and *darkness* here in Genesis chapter 1, and all the more so since all five of the uses of the verb here in Genesis chapter 1 are accompanied by the preposition *bayin*.] **(5) God called the light day, and the darkness He called night.** [Based on what I said above (and in Extended Notes A-E), I believe there is a strong symbolic/spiritual component for the words "light," "day," "darkness," and "night" here, along with the literal component for these words.] **And there was evening and there was morning, one day.** [Let's discuss the meaning of the word *day* for the seven days of the creation week of Genesis 1:1-2:3. (God didn't create on the seventh day.) In agreement with many (but probably not the majority), I don't believe these were literal twenty-four hour days, but this point isn't a big deal to me (it

³⁶ On God's being the source of light, see Extended Note D, "Symbolic Use of the Words Light, Darkness, Night, and Day." Commenting on the word "light" of Gen. 1:3, Waltke (*Genesis* [Zondervan, 2001]) says, "Light symbolizes life and blessings of various sorts (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 27:1; 49:20 [19]; 97:11). Since the sun is only later introduced...the text emphasizes that God is the *ultimate* source of light ..." (page 61).

³⁷ The other verses in the Old Testament that use *bayin* with *badal* are significant cross-references for understanding the use of these words here in Genesis chapter 1 (*badal* and *bayin* are also used in Gen. 1:6, 7, 14, and 18). Those other verses, which are quoted and briefly discussed in Extended Note E, are Lev. 10:10; 11:47; 20:25; Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 22:26; and 42:20.

doesn't affect what I say in this paper hardly at all).³⁸ I agree with the commentators (and there are many) who understand the seven days to be an artificial literary framework used by the author/Author. See Extended Note F, "The Use of *Day* and the *Seven Days* in the Creation Account of Genesis 1:1-2:3, Using an Artificial Literary Structure." For one thing, the number seven frequently serves as a symbol for perfection and completeness in the Bible, and significantly, the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 gives the basis for Israel's seven-day week, with six days of work followed by a day of rest. The seven day format of Gen. 1:1-2:3 was apparently designed³⁹ so that Moses' readers could identify with and imitate God's pattern. Significantly, Gen. 2:3 informs us that "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [He set it apart], because in it He rested from all His work which [He] created and made."

I'll list some key reasons for not seeing literal twenty-four hour days in this passage:

1. It's very significant that the sun (and moon and stars) were not created, according to this account of creation, until the fourth day.⁴⁰ Our twenty-four

³⁸ I don't have much insight as to how much time passed from the time God began His recreation of the earth (starting with His "Let there be light" on the first day of creation; the first day begins with the light that God called forth in Gen. 1:3) to the time He finished this recreation (the end of the sixth day). If it was a very short time it would be easier to understand Gen. 1:29, 30. Anyway, I'm not at all sure that it was a short time. As I discuss in some detail in this paper, I don't believe God has chosen to reveal hardly any scientific details in Genesis chapter 1.

Many commentators who believe that the days of creation week were literal twenty-four hour days do *not* believe that the universe and earth are young. There are several ways to see long periods of time before God said "Let there be light" on the first day of creation. I believe there was a gap before Gen. 1:1 (see Extended Note B). There are many who agree with the young-earth creationists that creation began at Gen. 1:1 and that the days were twenty-four hours, but they see a gap between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 (see Extended Note A), and some have seen a gap between 1:1, 2 and 1:3 (see footnote 12 in the Introduction of this paper).

³⁹ I assume the format came from God. If it didn't, He at least put His stamp of approval on Moses' use of the format. The account of the six days of creation followed by a day of rest and the fact that Israel had a seven day week with the seventh day set aside for rest and worship both originated with God. Under Gen. 2:3 I'll include some excerpts which show that the seventh day sabbath was unknown in the ancient world and that there is a good possibility that the seven day week originated with Israel (by God's revelation) too.

⁴⁰ I realize that some commentators argue that the sun, moon, and stars were actually created before the fourth day and that all this passage says is that they first *became visible* on the earth on the fourth day. I don't believe there's any chance that this is what was intended by the author/Author. It seems clear to me that in the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 the Hebrew verb *asah*, which is used of the creation of the sun and moon (and stars) in Gen. 1:16, is used interchangeably with the verb *bara* (the verb used for creation in 1:1, 21, 27; and 2:3).

The interchangeability of the two verbs in this creation account is demonstrated by the usage of these two verbs throughout this account: Gen. 1:16 says, "God made [*asah*] the two great lights," after saying in 1:14, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens." Gen. 1:17 goes on to say, "God placed them in the expanse [firmament] of the heavens." The "expanse [firmament]" was created/made (*asah*) on the second day (1:7). The verb *asah* is used for creation in Gen. 1:7, 16, 25, 26 (Gen. 1:26 says, "Let us make [*asah*] man"; Gen. 1:27 continues, "God created [*bara*] man"), 31 ("God saw all that He had made [*asah*]"); 2:2 ("By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done [*asah*], and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done [*asah*]"), 2:3 ("Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created [*bara*] and made [*asah*]"). Also, compare the use of *bara* in Gen. 1:1 with the use of *asah* in Ex. 20:11 ("For in six days

hour day-and-night cycle depends on the sun. Genesis 1:14 even says of the sun, moon, and stars, “Let them be for signs and for seasons and for days, and years. I certainly don’t believe we are supposed to think of God’s having provided an alternative before He created the sun (as I mentioned, I assume that God Himself was the source of this light) to cause a twenty-four hour light and darkness cycle for the first three days of creation.

2. Based on what I said under number 1 regarding the non-literal (non twenty-four hour) nature of the first three days of the creation week, it doesn’t seem reasonable to expect that the fourth through the seventh day would be literal twenty-four-hour days. As I mentioned, I agree with those who understand the seven days to be an artificial literary structure designed by the Author/author.
3. The fact that there is a strong symbolic component for the words *darkness* and *light* and that the symbolic component is much more important than the physical component of these words in Gen. 1:2-5 lends rather strong support to the concept that the seven days of the creation week are to be understood in non-literal fashion.
4. It’s very significant, as many have pointed out, that the seventh day in which God rested (Gen. 2:1-3) still continues—the seventh day wasn’t, therefore, a twenty-four hour day.⁴¹ Genesis 2:1-3 don’t mention that the seventh day ended, and the formula “And there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day” which was there for the other six days, was not included for the seventh day. Hebrews 4:1-10 (especially 4:3, 10) confirm that God entered His rest (not that He is resting/inactive in every sense; far from it). I’ll quote Heb. 4:3, “For we who have believed [The writer of Hebrews is speaking of born-again Christians] enter that rest [In agreement with many, I believe we should translate “are entering that rest,” or the equivalent. The writer of Hebrews isn’t speaking here of Christians entering God’s rest by casting our cares upon Him and walking in His grace by faith, as important as that type of rest is. He is speaking of our entering the eternal, heavenly rest of God *after* we have faithfully finished our work, at the end of our race. We will then enter God’s rest (which is spoken of throughout Heb. 4:1-11), the rest that God entered when He finished His work.], just as He said, ‘AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST’ [The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 95:11 to demonstrate that, although some fail through unbelief and rebellion to enter God’s rest, that rest *is* available for those who will enter on God’s terms.], although His works were finished from the foundation of the world [and He entered His rest at that time].”

the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”); and in Neh. 9:6.

⁴¹ Genesis 1:1-2:3 show that God finished His work of creation before the seventh day began. To say that His day of rest (which started when His work of creating was finished) will last forever must be qualified: At the end of this age, He will *create* the “new heaven and new earth” (Rev. 21:1). Furthermore, His *creative* work of saving and judging continues throughout this age.

5. As many have pointed out, when we read all that took place on the sixth day in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, it provides another rather strong reason for understanding the days in a non-literal sense.⁴² To see all that took place on the sixth day, read Gen. 1:24-31; 2:7-25. God could, of course, have accomplished everything mentioned there in twenty-four literal hours (or in less time if He chose to), even though Adam was directly involved with much of the activity mentioned in Gen. 2:7-25. I don't get the impression, however, that God was in a hurry or felt a need to do something miraculous to squeeze all that is mentioned as happening on the sixth day into a twenty-four hour period. Anyway, based on what has already been said under numbers 1-4, I wouldn't be expecting a literal twenty-four hour day for any of the days, very much including the sixth day.
6. And, lastly, as many have pointed out, the fact that the word *day* is used in Gen. 2:4 to cover all the creation that took place throughout the six *days* of Genesis chapter 1 lends rather strong support for the idea that the word *day* isn't being used in a literal twenty-four hour sense in the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3.

(We are still under Gen. 1:5.) Let's discuss the meaning of the words, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." (As I mentioned, the words "And there was evening, and there was morning" are used at the end of each of the first six days, but not for the seventh.) I'll quote what Bruce K. Waltke says here.⁴³ "One might translate this, 'Evening came, and then morning....' The idea, as expressed by the Hebrew, is that the first day ends when the darkness of the evening is expelled by the morning light." With the morning

⁴² I'll quote a long paragraph from Wayne Grudem that deals with this point (*Systematic Theology* [Zondervan, 1994], page 294). Grudem, by the way, doesn't come to a final conclusion regarding the length of the days of Genesis chapter 1. "An additional argument for a long period of time in these 'days' is the fact that the sixth day includes so many events that it must have been longer than twenty-four hours. The sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:24-31) includes the creation of animals and the creation of man and woman both ('male and female he created them,' Gen. 1:27). It was also on the sixth day that God blessed Adam and Eve and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' (Gen. 1:28). But that means that the sixth day included God's creation of Adam, God's putting Adam in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it, and giving Adam directions regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15-17), his bringing all the animals to man for them to be named (Gen. 2:18-20), finding no helper fit for Adam (Gen. 2:20), and then causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and creating Eve from his rib (Gen. 2:21-25). The finite nature of man and the incredibly large number of animals created by God would by itself seem to require that a much longer period of time than part of one day would be needed to include so many events—at least that would be an 'ordinary' understanding of the passage for an original reader, a consideration that is not unimportant in a debate that often emphasizes what an ordinary reading of the text by the original readers would lead them to conclude. [Those who insist that God created everything in six twenty-four hour days are the ones who often speak of what an 'ordinary' reading of the text by the original readers would conclude. Grudem has a footnote. "Advocates of a twenty-four-hour day can give scenarios whereby Adam only named representative types of animals or named them rapidly without any observation of their activities or abilities, but both suggestions are much less likely interpretations in view of the importance attached to naming in the Old Testament."] If the sixth day is shown by contextual considerations to be considerably longer than an ordinary twenty-four-hour day, then does not the context itself favor the sense of *day* as simply a 'period of time' of unspecified length?"

⁴³ *Genesis*, pages 61, 62.

light, the second day begins, just as the first day began when God created light with His words, “Let there be light.”

Many think the first day ends when the light of the first day ends. One reason for that view is the idea that for Israel the day ends and a new day begins when the sun goes down. (I’ll deal with that issue in the next paragraph.) Another reason many opt for that view is the widespread (but I believe mistaken) idea that the six days of creation include what happens in Gen. 1:1, 2. The first day could then be said to begin with the darkness mentioned in Gen. 1:2; I’m confident, however, that the six days of creation begin when God says, “Let there be light.” As we discussed, Gen. 1:1 serves as a title or summary for God’s week of creation; furthermore, as we have discussed, the darkness pictured in Gen. 1:2 wasn’t part of God’s work of creation; the darkness was already there when He began His work of creation (recreation) spelled out in Genesis chapter 1.

I’ll quote a part of what Ronald B. Allen says in the article on *‘ereb*, the Hebrew noun translated “evening,” in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.⁴⁴ “The phrase ‘there was an evening and there was a morning’ occurs six times in the creation narrative (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), delimiting the six days of divine creative activity. This phrase would indicate that in ancient Israel a day began with sunrise. Some have felt this at variance with the Jewish practice of regarding sunset as the beginning of the next day. Cassuto [a highly respected Jewish scholar], after dealing with the biblical data and the Jewish custom, concludes that there was ‘only one system of *computing* time: the day is considered to begin in the morning; but in regard to the festivals and appointed times, the Torah ordains that they shall be observed also on the night of the *preceding day*’ (U. Cassuto, *Genesis*, I, p. 29 [Cassuto’s emphasis]).” **(6) Then God said, “Let there be an expanse [firmament] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”** [The Hebrew could be translated, “Let it separate [*badal*] between [*bayin*] the waters and [*le*] the waters.”⁴⁵ The fact that the Hebrew verb *badal*, which was used in verse 4 (for separating the light from the darkness), was used here, and in the following verse, and even more so since *bayin* and *le* were used too (*bayin* and *bayin* are used with *badal* in the following verse), strongly suggests that we should expect an important reason for separating these two waters, and for keeping them separate. Above (under Gen. 1:2, under the words “was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving [hovering] over the surface of the waters”), I discussed the need to separate these two waters from one another. This wasn’t a mundane separating of waters from waters. This was the separating off of the large quantity of excess waters, with which God had (apparently) flooded the earth in an earlier judgment, as part of His creative work that would prepare the earth for man.

The separating off of the waters of judgment was a *good* and necessary thing. If these waters had not been separated off, man could not have lived on the earth. At the time of Noah’s flood, God apparently used those same waters to destroy mankind from the earth (with the exception of Noah and his family, who were preserved through the ark) because of the rebellion of man as they aligned themselves closely with the devil in his rebellion and darkness.

⁴⁴ Moody Bible Institute, 1980, page 694.

⁴⁵ Sometimes the Hebrew uses the preposition *bayin* followed by the preposition *le* instead of using *bayin* twice. For examples of this usage, see Lev. 20:25; Ezek. 22:26; and 42:20 in Extended Note E.

2 Peter 3:5-7 are an important cross-reference; these verses explain why God created our world with a large quantity of excess waters above the firmament. I'll include a brief discussion of 2 Pet. 3:5-7 here. (These verses are discussed in some detail in my verse-by-verse study of 2 Peter dated April 2002.) In context Peter was refuting mockers who were saying, "all continues just as it was from the beginning," while denying the coming of judgment day at the end of this age (2 Pet. 2:16-21; 3:3-18).

I'll quote 2 Pet. 3:5-7 and make some comments in brackets, "For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that [The NIV seems better, "But they deliberately forget that."] by the word of God [cf. Gen. 1:1-10] *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water [I would translate something like, "and the earth existing out of water (referring to the dry land that existed after the waters left on the earth were gathered together in Gen. 1:9, 10) and between water (between the water stored above the firmament and the water stored in the fountains of the great deep, with which the world was flooded in Noah's day.)"], through which [The Greek word behind "which" is plural. I believe it refers to the waters above and the waters below that God used to flood the earth in Noah's day.] the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. [Noah's flood demonstrated, for one thing, that what the mockers were saying wasn't true: Things hadn't always continued the same since creation. And they were wrong in denying that the Lord is coming to judge the world at the end of this age. The flood of Noah's day took place, and it foreshadowed God's end-time judgment of the world (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20, 21; 2 Pet. 2:5).] (7) But [or, And] by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. [On the "fire," cf. 2 Pet. 3:10. I prefer a translation like, "are stored up with fire." Just as the ancient world was stored up with waters that were to be used in judgment (by God's creative design), the present heavens and earth are stored up with fire that is to be used in His end-time judgments (by His creative design). The primary point I want to make here is that 2 Pet. 3:5-7 help confirm that the excess waters existed above the firmament, by God's creative design, in preparation for the flood of Noah's day. God, through His foreknowledge, knew of the intense rebellion that would take place on the earth in the days before Noah's flood. He knew it was coming, and He was prepared for it (as He always is prepared for everything). I'm not denying, of course, that beneficial rains fall on the earth from above; I have just been dealing with the large quantity of excess waters.] (7) **God made the expanse** [firmament; the NASB has, "or, firmament" in the margin; see under Gen. 1:8 on the meaning], **and separated the waters which were below the expanse** [firmament] **from the waters which were above the expanse** [firmament; compare Psalms 104:3⁴⁶; 148:4. The Hebrew here in Gen. 1:7 could be translated, "He separated [*badal*] between [*bayin*] the waters which were below the firmament and [*bayin*] the waters which were above the firmament." It's clear that God couldn't separate off the waters which were to be above the firmament until He had

⁴⁶ I'll give Mitchell Dahood's translation for the first line of Psalm 104:3, "Who stored with water his upper chambers" (*Psalms III 101-150* [Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970], page 31). I'll also quote a small part of what he says regarding this translation when discussing this verse on page 32, "From this proposed translation naturally follows the sequel in vs. 13, 'Who waters the mountains from his upper chambers....' I'll quote part of what A. F. Kirkpatrick says under Psalm 104:3 (*Book of Psalms* [1982 Baker reprint of the 1902 edition], page 606). Kirkpatrick speaks of "the mysterious reservoir of waters, which was imagined by the ancient Hebrews to exist above the 'firmament' (Gen. 1:7; Ps. 29:3; 148:4).... The line is an echo of Amos 9:6, 'he that buildeth his upper chambers in the heavens.' "

made/created the firmament.]; **and it was so. (8) God called the expanse [firmament] heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.** [Genesis chapter 1 has quite a bit to say about the “firmament” (Hebrew *raqia*). It was used to separate the waters below from the waters above (Gen. 1:6, 7). In Gen. 1:8 “God called the expanse [firmament] heaven.” (The Hebrew word for heaven is plural; the NIV translates “called the expanse sky.”) In Gen. 1:14, 15, and 17 we read that God created the lights (sun, moon, and stars) and placed them “in the expanse [firmament] of the heavens.” In Gen. 1:20 we read of the birds flying above the earth “in the open expanse [firmament] of the heavens.” I strongly prefer the more literal translation of the NKJV, “across the face of the firmament of the heavens”; the birds could not fly “in the firmament.”

For the word “expanse” the NASB has the alternative translation “firmament” for each of these verses in Genesis chapter 1 (1:6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, and 20). Many agree with the viewpoint presented in the BDB Hebrew Lexicon for the meaning of *raqia* in these verses, “the vault of heaven, or ‘firmament,’ regarded by the Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it....”⁴⁷ (I believe this is the meaning intended by the author/Author.) Regarding the meaning of this noun, BDB also says, “extended surface, (solid) expanse (as if *beaten out*; cf. Job 37:18 [“Can you, with Him, spread out the skies (or, heavens), strong as a molten mirror?”]).” The verb this Hebrew noun (*raqia*) was derived from was sometimes used for beating out metal plates. Isaiah 40:22b says, “Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain [“canopy” NIV] And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.” Revelation 6:14, speaking of God’s end-time judgment of the world, says, “The sky [or, heavens] was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up.” It’s not difficult to picture a relatively thin, solid firmament (which was viewed as a foundational part of the heavens) being rolled up as a scroll.] **(9) Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.** [Compare Job 38:8-11; Psalm 104:1-9⁴⁸; and Jer. 5:22. As we have discussed, the large amounts of excess water had already been separated from the earth and placed “above the expanse [firmament].” In order for the dry land to appear it still was necessary to drain the waters from what was to become “dry land.” Draining the waters probably included cutting channels/rivers that would facilitate the waters flowing into the seas. It is also possible that some (or all) of the land that was to become “dry land” had to rise in elevation, but I doubt that idea was intended in this verse.] **(10) God called the dry land earth [“called the dry ground ‘land’ ” NIV], and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. (11) Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so. (12) The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees**

⁴⁷ I’ll quote what Edward J. Young, a well-respected evangelical scholar, says regarding the meaning of *raqia* here (*Studies in Genesis One* [P&R, about 1964], page 90, footnote 94). “*i.e.*, that which is hammered, beaten out. Cf. Isa. 42:5; Ps. 136:6 and the Phoenician... ‘plating’ (Cooke: *North Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1903, p. 75). Note also the LXX *stereōma* and Vulgate *firmamentum*, which are satisfactory renderings. I am unable to accept the opinion that the waters above the expanse refer to the clouds, for this position does not do justice to the language of the text which states that these waters are *above* the expanse [firmament].” Paul H. Seely persuasively argues for this view of the firmament; see Extended Note H.

⁴⁸ There is widespread agreement that these verses deal with the Genesis 1 creation, not Noah’s flood.

bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. (13) There was evening and there was morning, a third day. (14) Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse [firmament] of the heavens to separate the day from the night [See under Gen. 1:18.], and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years [Ancient Israel’s calendar, with its days, (lunar) months, seasons, and years was based on the daily rotation of the sun, moon, and stars about the earth (actually the earth was rotating daily on its axis, but they didn’t know that then) and the monthly phases of the moon (caused by the moon’s rotation about the earth every month, starting with the new moon; to be precise, a lunar month is 29.530588 days). I’ll quote part of what H. C. Leupold says regarding the meaning of “for signs” here.⁴⁹ “Now signs...is here used in the broadest possible sense. Indeed, the luminaries are signs from various points of view. They are ‘signs’ to devout faith, declaring the glory of their Creator (cf. Ps. 8 and 19). They are ‘signs’ by which men get their bearings, or the point of the compass by day or by night. They may convey ‘signs’ in reference to future events (Matt. 2:2; Luke 21:25). They furnish quite reliable ‘signs’ for determining in advance the weather to be expected (Matt. 16:2, 3). They may be ‘signs’ of divine judgments (Joel 2:30; Matt. 24:29). That they may well serve in all these capacities is clear both from Scripture and from experience.”]; (15) and let them be for lights in the expanse [firmament] of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. (16) God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made the stars also.* [As I mentioned, I believe the creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 clearly speaks of the sun, moon, and stars being created on the fourth day (not before the fourth day). That causes a problem with modern science, but it fits perfectly with the earth-centered viewpoint of the Scriptures. (I’m speaking of the earth being the center with respect to the sun, moon, and stars, not with respect to God or heaven). I list quite a few verses to demonstrate the earth-centered viewpoint, with the earth being stationary, of the Scriptures in Extended Note G (“Galileo’s Trial and the Interpretation of Scripture”). For one thing, as many have pointed out, the writers of Scripture (in a manner typical for man) often speak of things as they appear to the senses, as they *seem* to be.⁵⁰ The earth *seemed* to be the

⁴⁹ *Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Wartburg Press, 1942), page 73.

⁵⁰ “Thus Genesis’ description of the ‘expanse [firmament]’ is phenomenological [as things appear to an observer on the earth]...” (Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26* [Broadman, 1996, 1997, 2001], page 150). Matthews has a footnote, “As B. Ramm explains, the Bible’s ‘language about astronomy, botany, zoology, and geology is restricted to the vocabulary of popular observation. What can be seen through microscope or telescope is not commented on. Phenomenal language is true because all it claims is to be descriptive’ (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. [...Baker, 1970], 210).”

I’ll quote part of what John Calvin said on this topic under Gen. 1:16 (*Genesis* [Crossway Books, 2001], pages 22, 23). “...Moses described in popular style what all ordinary men without training and education perceive with their ordinary senses. Astronomers, on the other hand, investigate with great labor whatever the keenness of man’s intellect is able to discover. Such study is certainly not to be disapproved, nor science condemned with the insolence of some fanatics who habitually reject whatever is unknown to them. The study of astronomy not only gives pleasure but is also extremely useful. And no one can deny that it admirably reveals the wisdom of God. Therefore, clever men who expend their labor upon it are to be praised, and those who have ability and leisure ought not to neglect work of that kind.

Moses did not wish to keep us from such study when he omitted the scientific details. But since he had been appointed a guide of unlearned men rather than of the learned, he could not fulfill his duty except by coming down to their level. If he had spoken of matters unknown to the crowd, the unlearned could say that his teaching was over their heads. In fact, when the Spirit of God opens a common school for all, it is not strange that he chooses to teach especially what can be understood by all. (Footnote continues on the next page.)

stable, unmovable center of the visible universe, with the sun, moon, and stars rotating around the earth. Also, it was very clear to God's people, based on what God had revealed to them (special revelation), that the earth had been created (recreated) especially for man, and that it was the earth, not the sun, moon, or stars, that was God's chosen center of activity.

God could, of course, have included many verses in the Bible that would satisfy modern science. He could have revealed, for example, that the earth rotates on its axis and it rotates around the sun. That would have provided an effective apologetic tool for the generations that lived after science discovered that the sun-centered viewpoint is correct after all, but He clearly didn't choose to reveal that information in the Bible. For one thing, incorporating such details would have been terribly confusing and distracting for the large number of earlier generations; it would undoubtedly have seriously detracted from God's primary purpose for the Bible. Anyway, for those who have a heart open to God, He has more than adequately demonstrated to each generation (very much including our own) that the Bible is His book, a unique book. Those who begin to open their hearts to the God who is there and to examine the Bible always find that it

When the astronomer seeks the true size of stars and finds the moon smaller than Saturn, he gives us specialized knowledge. But the eye sees things differently, and Moses adapts himself to the ordinary view.

God has stretched out his hand to us to give us the splendor of the sun and moon to enjoy. Great would be our ingratitude if we shut our eyes to this experience of beauty! There is no reason why clever men should jeer at Moses' ignorance. He is not explaining the heavens to us but is describing what is before our eyes. [Also, Moses and the other writers of Scripture were limited to how much God chose to reveal to them.] ...”.

I'll quote a few sentences from what John H. Walton says on this topic (*Genesis*, pages 87-90). “There is not a single example of God revealing scientifically transcendent information to the Israelites. [Walton has a footnote here, “An intriguing and detailed discussion of this can be found in P. Seely, *Inerrant Wisdom* (...Evangelical Reform, 1989), 1-21.” I quote extensively from Paul Seely in Extended Note H.] In fact, the evidence is to the contrary. Consider the following four examples: [I'll just quote his third example:] The movements of the celestial bodies and the understanding of weather all are described in terms similar to that in the rest of the ancient Near East. ...” (pages 87, 88). “Are we so presumptuous as to think that inspired text, to be ‘true,’ must somehow incorporate our view of science into its discussions of origins?” (page 90).

I'll also include a few excerpts from Charles E. Hummel (*Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, Vol. 38, No. 3, September 1986). “Preoccupation with *how long* it took God to create the world, in days or epochs, deflects attention from the main point of Genesis 1. Such ‘scientific’ concerns run interpretation onto a siding, away from the main track of God's revelation. Once we get past arguments over the length of days [and a few other scientific details], we can see the intended meaning of these days [and the intended meaning of Genesis chapters 1-3] for Israel” (page 182).

After mentioning several attempts by some Christians to square the creation account with the details of modern science, Hummel says, “...they attempt to find answers to questions the text does not address, about the *how* or the mechanism of natural forces. (To see how inappropriate such an approach is, consider its opposite: suppose one tried to derive information about the meaning and purpose of life from a technical treatise on astronomy in which the author had no intention of revealing his philosophy.) The biblical accounts of creation do not provide scientific data or descriptions. ... any extent to which Genesis teaches modern scientific concepts would have made its message unintelligible to its first readers, and to most of the people who have lived during the last three thousand years. ...” (page 185).

I continue with this important theme in Extended Note H, “The Bible and Science.” (For one thing, as I mentioned, I quote extensively from Paul Seely there, who was mentioned by Walton earlier in this footnote.) In that Note we also discuss inerrancy and the Bible. (I believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, but we must define what we mean by inerrancy.) I suggest you read Extended Notes G and H now, or after finishing Gen. 1:18.

reveals the things men need to know, including the fact that He (and He alone) can save from sin, spiritual death, darkness, Satan, and eternal judgment.

The fact that the Bible is filled with prophecies, many of which have already been fulfilled, is sufficient to demonstrate that this *is* God’s book—there is no book like it.⁵¹ Those who open their hearts to God and His Word will find more than sufficient confirmation that He is real, that the Bible is true, and that He will meet the deepest needs of their hearts and lives. God calls men to submit to Him in repentance and faith. Faith in Christ isn’t a leap into the dark (it is a leap into the arms of the God of the Bible, a leap in accordance with His Word), but repentance and faith involve the heart of man and require going beyond logical evidence that will satisfy the intellect of man. God wants/demands our hearts—and He won’t settle for less.] **(17) God placed them [the sun, moon, and stars] in the expanse [firmament] of the heavens to give light on the earth, (18) and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.** [Genesis 1:14-19 build on Gen. 1:2-8, and the interpretation of Gen. 1:14-19 given here builds on the interpretation of Gen. 1:2-8 given above. Having a more literal translation for the key words in the center of verses 14 and 18 will be helpful: “to separate [or, distinguish (*badal*)] between [*bayin*] the day and [*bayin*] the night” (Gen. 1:14); “to separate [or, distinguish (*badal*)] between [*bayin*] the light and [*bayin*] the darkness” (Gen. 1:18).⁵² Although it isn’t as obvious here in 1:14-18 as in 1:2-5, I believe there is a symbolic component for the words “light,” “darkness,” “day,” and “night” here in 1:14 and 18 too.⁵³ There wasn’t

⁵¹ For a discussion regarding the fact that prophecies in the Bible confirm that God is God and the Bible is His book, and for a listing of some of those prophecies, see pages 8, 9 of my paper dated August 2000. As discussed there, God frequently makes the claim that He, and He alone, is able to give such prophecies and then bring to pass the things prophesied.

⁵² As discussed above, and with the confirming evidence given in Extended Note E, the dominant use of the Hebrew verb *badal* throughout the Old Testament (and all-the-more-so since the Hebrew preposition *bayin* was used here in Gen. 1:14, 18, as it was in Gen. 1:4, 6, 7 and other verses of the Old Testament) strongly favors seeing a separation of things that must be separated, and kept separated, like the holy from the unholy, and the good from the evil.

⁵³ As we discussed above, physical light and darkness were undoubtedly included along with the strong symbolic/spiritual component of the light and darkness of Gen. 1:2-5. Here in Gen. 1:14-18 there is some obvious emphasis on physical light in that the “lights/luminaries” that God created on the fourth day were created, for one thing, “to give light [physical light] on the earth.” Nevertheless, it seems that the far-more-important symbolic/spiritual component of light and darkness are included here too (building on Gen. 1:2-5).

Apparently we can say that at least one reason God chose to create our world with a daytime, nighttime cycle (speaking of physical light, darkness, daytime, and nighttime) was to provide His people with a constant reminder of the all-important reality that apart from God’s kingdom of light, there is the all-too-real kingdom of sin, Satan, darkness, and death. (These evil things haven’t been abolished yet, but Jesus Christ will abolish them from God’s kingdom soon. They have already been defeated through His atoning death.) It seems that God went out of His way in the Mosaic Law, which was the foundation for the old covenant (which in turn provided the foundation and framework for the new covenant), to provide His people (all who had ears to hear) with constant reminders of the reality of sin, Satan, darkness, and death. (The creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 was part of the Mosaic Law, and part of the Old Testament. It was not written for people who were limited to the information contained in these verses.)

Not only was physical death a constant reminder of sin and its penalties and consequences under the old covenant, but God clearly showed in the Mosaic Law that physical death was an enemy, something that was not good, something that was unclean and defiling. It was not part of God’s good creation. If the sons of Israel came in contact with death, they became defiled, unclean; they were to be excluded from the camp of the people of God until they had been cleansed, on the seventh day, through the ashes of a

much of a need, if any need at all, to separate (or to distinguish) between physical light and physical darkness, but the separating (or distinguishing) between light and darkness when understood in a symbolic/spiritual sense is a dominant message of the Bible, as discussed above under Gen. 1:2-5. It is necessary and “good” to distinguish between and to separate between the light and the darkness when they are understood in a symbolic/spiritual sense.] **(19) There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. (20) Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse [firmament] of the heavens** [For a more accurate translation of the last words of this verse, and for a discussion regarding the meaning of the firmament, see above, under Gen. 1:8.]” **(21) God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. (22) God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” (23) There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. (24) Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind”; and it was so. (25) God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.** [God created the plants, trees, fish, birds, animals, etc, after their kind. They didn’t evolve from another kind. (See Extended Note K.) By God’s design there is some room for micro-evolution within a kind, as animals, for example, adapt to their environment, or with the breeding of animals for different purposes, but God is the Creator of each kind, and He determined the degrees of adaptation that are attainable.] **(26) Then God said, “Let Us** [Also see Gen. 3:22; 11:7. I agree with the large number of commentators who understand God to be speaking to the heavenly beings surrounding Him here, the cherubim, seraphim, archangel(s), etc. (Many only see the Trinity here, with “Us” referring to the three Persons of the Trinity.) I’ll quote part of what Bruce K. Waltke says here, “The explanation that better satisfies all such uses of the pronoun [The other such uses of the pronoun “us” are Gen. 3:22; 11:7; and Isa. 6:8.] is that God is addressing the angels or heavenly court (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-22 [In these verses God interacts with “all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left.”]; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1-3; 89:5-6 [I’ll quote Psalm 89:5-7, “The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your

sacrificed red heifer. (See Numbers chapter 19.) For those Israelites who had been set apart by God in a special sense, like the priests (see Lev. 21:1-4), and much more so for the high priests (Lev. 21:10, 11), or for those with a Nazarite vow (see Num. 6:6-12), to come in contact with death was a more serious matter and must be avoided (as far as it was possible). Such reminders of sin and its penalties and consequences were designed by God to help humble His people and to help motivate them to put Him and His Word first place in their hearts and lives and to fear sinning against Him.

Another constant reminder of the awesome reality of sin, darkness, etc, that God gave His people in the Mosaic Law dealt with sexual relations and the bearing of children. Although it was understood that sexual relations in marriage and the bearing of children were a blessing from God, it was also understood that everything associated with the process, including the menstrual cycle, had been affected by the fall (ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, children have been born outside the garden of Eden into a fallen world that is permeated with darkness and death) and now involved uncleanness and pain along with blessing. See, for example, Gen. 3:16; Lev. 12:1-8; and 15:16-33. Other constant reminders were sickness and disease (see chapter D of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*) and all the things that worked against the production of food (cf. Gen. 3:17-19).

faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. (6) For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, (7) A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?"]; Isa. 6:8 ["Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I [Isaiah] said, 'Here am I, send me!' " In the preceding verses of Isaiah chapter 6, the seraphim play a major role (see Isa. 6:2, 6, 7); I assume God was speaking to them here (or to them and the rest of the heavenly council).]...). ... It is not surprising that God would address the heavenly court, since angels play a prominent role in Scripture....⁵⁴ Also see Isa. 24:24; Rev. 1:1; 4:4-11 (In Rev. 4:4-11 we see the twenty-four elders [high-level angelic beings] crowned and sitting on thrones around the throne of God, and we see the four living creatures around the throne. The four living creatures interact with God and play important roles in the outworking of His plans as shown by Rev. 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 7:13, 14; 8:2; 14:18; 15:1, 5-7; 16:1-17; 17:1; and 21:9, 10.)

The angels are called "sons of God" (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). We Christians become sons of God in Christ (Matt. 5:9, 45; Luke 6:35; 20:35, 36 ["but those who are considered worthy to attain to the age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection"]; Rom. 8:14, 15, 19, 23; Gal. 3:26; 4:5, 6; Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:10; and 12:5, 7, 8).

I'm sure that God could have done without His heavenly council and ignored them (He didn't have to create them in the first place), but God isn't like that. He chooses to delegate authority to, and to use, those He has created (He created them for a purpose; that purpose includes using them, but even more importantly, it includes establishing a love relationship with them)—that includes us too, and especially after we are glorified.

I'll include a brief excerpt from what Gordon J. Wenham says here.⁵⁵ "... 'Let us create man' should...be regarded as a divine announcement to the heavenly court, drawing the angelic host's attention to the master stroke of creation, man. [Wenham went on to mention Job 38:4, 7 ('When I laid the foundation of the earth...all the sons of God shouted for joy')....'] **make [Hebrew *asah*] man in Our image, according to Our likeness** [Compare Gen. 5:1, 3 ("...Adam...became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and he named him Seth."); Gen. 9:6; and James 3:9. For us to be created in the image and likeness of God includes the fact that we are moral beings, created to be righteous in submission to God; that God can delegate authority to us and we can work (see the rest of the verse and the following verse); that we have a will, we think, and we have emotions. Also, significantly, because we have been created in His image, we can communicate with Him, and worship Him.

Even though the image and likeness of God in man was defaced through the fall, something of the image and likeness of God remains (cf., e.g., Gen. 5:1; 9:6; and James 3:9). The image and likeness of God in man is restored and even taken to a higher level through salvation and union with Christ Jesus (the God-man); in the glorified state we will have the image and likeness of God in a much fuller sense than Adam had before the fall (cf., e. g., Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:4; Eph. 4:24; Col. 1:15; 3:10; and 1 John

⁵⁴ Waltke has a footnote, "...God's address of the heavenly court does not mean that they participate in the act of creation."

⁵⁵ *Genesis 1-15*, pages 27, 28.

3:2).]; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (27) God created [The Hebrew verb *bara* is used three times in this verse.] man [Hebrew *adam* (also in 1:26); “man” speaks of mankind, “male and female.” The noun for *Adam* is exactly the same in Hebrew.] in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [Genesis 2:18-25 provide some details regarding God’s creation of Eve, and regarding her role.] (28) God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it [Compare Gen. 9:1, 7. The NASB, KJV, NKJV, and NIV all translate “subdue” here; the *Jerusalem Bible* has “conquer.” The primary thing Adam and Eve needed to subdue/conquer at that time was the potential to rebel against God through eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby joining the devil in his rebellion and darkness. Man was created a free moral agent with the potential for sin. It doesn’t seem that Adam and Eve needed to subdue/conquer the animals, birds, etc.; Genesis chapters 1, 2 give the strong impression that, before the fall, the animals, etc. were docile (see Gen. 1:30; 2:19, 20). After the fall there was a need to subdue some animals, etc, and to rule over them.

The devil and darkness didn’t have authority over Adam and Eve before they sinned, but the devil and the darkness were very much on the scene, as we discussed above in some detail. Adam and Eve were obligated to use their God given authority to resist the lies and temptations of the evil one and to stay within the boundaries God had ordained for them, living (from the heart) in obedience to Him, in the center of His will.

God had a plan before the foundation of the world to subdue the devil and darkness through man, but man under, and in union with, the man (the God-man) Christ Jesus (see Gen. 3:14, 15; Rom. 16:20 [“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”]). This plan required the Son of God to condescend to become a man (but not just a man; He never ceased being deity). Through His sinless life and His atoning death on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ has totally defeated Satan, death, and darkness (which will be fully manifested at the right time), and He earned the right to save all of mankind who submit (in repentance and faith) to God and His plan of salvation.

The Hebrew verb (*kabash*) behind “subdue/conquer” is a strong verb. I’ll quote part of what John N. Oswalt says regarding the meaning of this verb in the article on this verb in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.⁵⁶ “*Kabash* assumes that the party being subdued is hostile to the subduer, necessitating some sort of coercion if the subduing is to take place. [The verb is used]...of the conquest of the Caananites in Num. 32:22, 29; Josh. 18:1; 1 Chron. 22:18. In 2 Chron. 28:10; Neh. 5:5; Jer. 34:11, 16 it refers to forced servitude. Therefore ‘subdue’ in Gen. 1:28 implies that creation will not do man’s bidding gladly or easily and that man must now bring creation into submission by main strength. It is not to rule man.”

Psalms 8 is an important cross-reference for Gen. 1:26-28. I’ll quote Psalm 8:5-7, “Yet You have made him [man] a little lower than God [or, the angels], And You crown him with glory and majesty! (6) You make him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things beneath his feet, (7) All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, (8) The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.” The thing that makes this psalm so significant and exciting is the exalted sense in which it is

⁵⁶ Vol. 1 (Moody Press, 1980), page 430.

interpreted in Heb. 2:5-13. The “all things” of Psalm 8:6 is interpreted to include the enemies of God (not just the animals, birds, fish, etc.).

The Lord Jesus Christ subdues all the enemies of God and puts them beneath His feet. Much of this subduing is still future, starting with the second coming of Christ (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:23-28), but it is as good as done in the plan of God. The future subduing of Satan and his kingdom of darkness is based on the atoning death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ that has already been accomplished. Hebrews 2:5-13 show that Christ’s brethren (believers) will reign with Him. We will reign with Him from the time of the mid-week glorification and rapture. This reigning will include subduing, judging, and removing all who persist in rebellion. We will rule with a rod of iron (see Rev. 2:26, 27; 12:5; and 19:15). In this present life we have authority as Christians to subdue and remove the darkness (which includes sin and demons) from our hearts and lives and to spread the kingdom as far as God enables. Psalm 8; Heb. 2:5-11; and other relevant verses are discussed on pages 76-80 of my book *Mid-Week Rapture*; Psalm 8 will be discussed verse-by-verse in my next paper (dated September 2004).

I’ll quote part of what Allen P. Ross says here.⁵⁷ “...humans are to have dominion over the world. The terms used suggest putting down opposition and were perhaps used in anticipation of the conflict with evil. As the Scriptures unfold, however, one realizes how humans have failed at this task [starting with the initial rebellion when Adam and Eve accepted the darkness and sided with the devil against God]. The New Testament states that ‘we do not yet see all things under his dominion,’ but Jesus Christ, the express image of the Father, will ultimately re-establish such dominion (Heb. 2:8-9).”]; **and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (29) Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; (30) and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life** [In the margin the NASB has, “Literally, *in which is a living soul.*” Plants don’t have souls. Furthermore, the souls of animals are quite different than the souls of man in that animals were not created in the image of God.], ***I have given every green plant for food*”; and it was so.** [These verses give the strong impression that before the fall the beasts and birds did not eat meat, and this impression is strengthened by Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25 (verses that speak of wolves, lions, leopards, and bears eating vegetation and not being a danger to the lambs, calves, etc. in the coming kingdom). Romans 8:20-22 fit that idea too. “The narrative [Sarna is speaking of Gen. 1:29, 30] presupposes a pristine state of vegetarianism. Isaiah’s vision of the ideal future in 11:7 and 65:25 sees the carnivorous animals becoming herbivorous.”⁵⁸ “...humankind survives on a vegetarian diet. What is strange, and probably unexplainable (from a scientific position), is the fact that the animals too are not carnivores but also vegetarians.”⁵⁹

I’ll quote part of what Wenham says here.⁶⁰ “Westermann (1:163-164) cites other texts to show that there was a widespread belief in antiquity that man and animals were once vegetarian. ... Genesis 1...does not forbid the consumption of meat, and it may be that meat

⁵⁷ *Creation and Blessing* (Baker, 1998), page 113.

⁵⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pages 13, 14.

⁵⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Eerdmans, 1990), page 140.

⁶⁰ *Genesis 1-15*, pages 33, 34.

eating is envisaged from the time of the fall. ... Abel kept and sacrificed sheep (4:2-4), and Noah distinguished clean and unclean animals (7:2). [The Israelites were permitted to sacrifice and to eat “clean” animals, but not the “unclean.”] Gispén may therefore be correct in suggesting that 9:3 is ratifying the post-fall practice of meat-eating rather than inaugurating it.”

I’ll quote part of what Franz Delitzsch says here.⁶¹ “...at the beginning peace prevailed between man and the beasts, and among the beasts towards each other. ... Outside of Israel too the tradition is widely spread, that men and animals were originally satisfied with vegetable food. ... The objection, that the teeth and intestines of men, as well as of many beasts, are adapted for both animal and vegetable diet, does not perplex us, — the whole of the six days’ creation is, so to speak, supralapsarian [which means, “before the fall”], *i.e.* is constituted that the consequences of the foreseen fall of man were taken into account, and that there should be no need of remodeling of creation. That man can live and thrive without animal food is a fact confirmed by experience.... Nor does the reference to the animals of the *primaeval* world, among whom devouring each other was already customary, seem to us any counter-proof. For such animals belong to the time prior to the world of man, while the peace, which restriction to vegetable diet would secure, refers only to the animal world contemporary with man, and appointed to live along with him.”

It’s easy for me to think of animals and other beings killing one another on the earth after Satan’s rebellion took place, but before Gen. 1:1. (There were no *human* beings, descendants of Adam, in that world.) But Gen. 1:29, 30 indicate that the animals were vegetarians before the fall of Adam and Eve. That would at least apply to the animals “contemporary with man, and appointed to live along with him” (quoting Delitzsch from the last paragraph).

I’ll also quote part of what Henry M. Morris says here.⁶² “As far as carnivorous animals are concerned, their desire for meat must also have been a later development, either at the time of the Curse or after the Flood. [I don’t believe it would have been as late as after the flood.] Even today, of course, such animals can and will (if they have to) live on a vegetarian diet. Whether such structures as fangs and claws were part of their original equipment, or were recessive features which only became dominant due to selection processes later, or were mutational features following the Curse, or exactly what, must await further research.”

(31) God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. [All that God made in His creation (recreation) that is spelled out in Gen. 1:1-30 was very good. Behind the scenes, however, there was an evil kingdom of rebellion and darkness headed up by the devil that existed before God began His creative work spelled out in Gen. 1:1-30.] **And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.** [“The exceptional definite article here and with the seventh day points to the special character of these days within the scheme of Creation.”⁶³ The definite article (“the” in English) was not used in the Hebrew for the first five days.]

⁶¹ *Genesis* (Klock and Klock reprint, 1978; originally published by T. & T. Clark in 1888), pages 102, 103.

⁶² *The Genesis Record* (Baker, 1976), page 78.

⁶³ Sarna, *Genesis*, page 14.

GENESIS CHAPTER 2

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. [Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3 speak of the sun, moon, and stars being the “host(s)” of heaven.] **(2) By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done [asah], and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done [asah].** [God had finished His work of creation before the seventh day began; see #4 under Gen. 1:5, including the footnote there.] **(3) Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested** [The Hebrew verb is *shabath*, which means to cease, to desist, to rest. The Hebrew noun (*shabbath*) that is translated sabbath(s) 107 times in the Old Testament (NASB) was derived from this verb.] **from all His work which God had created [bara] and made [asah].** [As I mentioned when discussing Genesis chapter 1, I believe, in agreement with many, that the seven days of Gen. 1:1-2:3 was an artificial literary framework designed by God (for one reason) to provide the basis for Israel’s seven-day week, with six days of work and a day of rest. (See Extended Note F, “The Use of *Day* and the *Seven Days* in the Creation Account of Genesis 1:1-2:3, Using an Artificial Literary Structure.”) The dominant idea here in Gen. 2:3 was to sanctify (set apart) the seventh day (the sabbath) as a day for rest and worship.

I’ll quote part of what Nahum M. Sarna says regarding the seventh day of Gen. 2:1-3.⁶⁴ “...there cannot be any doubt that the text [Gen. 2:1-3] provides the unspoken foundation for the future institution of the Sabbath. Not only is the vocabulary of the present passage interwoven with the other Pentateuchal references to the Sabbath,⁶⁵ but the connection with Creation is made explicit in the first version of the Ten Commandments, given in Exodus 20:8-11. ‘Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God.... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day... and hallowed it.’ The biblical institution of the weekly Sabbath is unparalleled in the ancient world. In fact, the concept of a seven-day week is unique to Israel, as is also, so far, the seven-day cosmogonic [creation] tradition. Both these phenomena are extraordinary in light of the widespread use of a seven-day unit of time, both as a literary convention and as an aspect of cultic observance in the ancient Near East. ...”.

I’ll quote a paragraph from Glenn Wyper regarding the origin of the seven-day week.⁶⁶ “The origin of the seven-day week is disputed. Despite many theories, there is thus far no conclusive evidence that it originated prior to the existence of Israel. It is clear, however, that the seven-day week, culminating in the Sabbath, was an important calendrical unit in Israel from its earliest days. During the period of the Roman empire the use of the seven-day week became widespread, probably through the influence of Jews and Christians.”

I’ll quote part of what Gordon J. Wenham says here.⁶⁷ “...God ‘blessed’ it [the seventh day] and ‘hallowed’ it [made it holy]. These are striking terms to apply to a day.apart from the Sabbath, only in Neh. 8:9, 11 is a festival day called holy. God is holy.... Anything... that is described as holy in the OT derives its holiness from being chosen by God and given to

⁶⁴ *Genesis* (Jewish Publication Society, 1989), page 14.

⁶⁵ Sarna has an endnote, “Exod. 15:5, 22, 26; 23:12; 31:13-17; 34:21; 35:2; Lev. 23:3 all bear traces of the vocabulary of our passage.”

⁶⁶ Article on “week” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia – Fully Revised*, Vol. 4 (Eerdmans, 1988), page 1045.

⁶⁷ *Genesis 1-15* (Word, Incorporated, 1987), page 36.

him in the correct prescribed manner (see G. J. Wenham, *Leciticus*, 18-27). ...Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath."] **(4) This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created** [Victor P. Hamilton translates, "These are the generations of the heavens and earth when they were created."⁶⁸ I'll quote part of what he says on the meaning of these words, "Here one encounters the first of ten appearances of the formula *These are the generations of* (Hebrew *elleh toledoth*) in Genesis (see also 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; cf. 5:1 for a variant of the formula ["this is the book of the generations of Adam"]). This first one differs from the others in that it describes the *generations of the heavens and the earth* while the others introduce either the descendants of some person or a narrative about some person (e.g., Noah, sons of Noah/Terah/Ishmael/Isaac/Esau/Jacob). While something like 'offspring, descendants' would fit many of the last nine, it may seem strange to refer to the 'offspring' or 'children' of the universe, but that is expressly what Gen. 2:4 intends. ... the phrase *the generations of the heavens and the earth* describes not the process by which the heavens and earth are generated, but rather that which is generated by the heavens and the earth. ..." (page 151). Of course God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of the "offspring" of the heavens and the earth.

I'll quote from Bruce K. Waltke.⁶⁹ "After the prologue representing the creation of the cosmos (1:1-2:3), the author of Genesis introduces ten new initiatives in salvation history with a *toledoth* heading (i.e., 'the account of the line of X') and transitions linking these developments: The account of the line of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26); Transition (4:25-26); The account of Adam's line (5:1-6:8), Transition (6:1-8).... the heading of the first account is an ad hoc [for this special case] literary creation. Obviously the inanimate heaven and earth cannot give birth to Adam, but he has no human parentage. ..." (pages 17, 18).

Genesis 2:4-4:26 is far from being a second creation account; the emphasis of this section is all on man; it supplies many details not included in Gen. 1:1-2:3., **in the day** [Hebrew *yom*; the "day" here includes the six days of Genesis chapter 1. The same Hebrew noun (*yom*) was used for each of the seven days of Gen. 1:1-2:3.] **that the LORD God made earth and heaven. (5) Now no shrub** [This Hebrew noun (*siach*), which means *bush, shrub, plant* was used three other times in the Old Testament, translated "bushes" by the NASB (Gen. 21:18; Job 30:4 [twice]).] **of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant** [This Hebrew noun (*eseb*) was translated as follows by the NASB: grass (8), herb (1), herbs (1), plant (9), plants (3), and vegetation (11). It was the noun translated "plants" in Gen. 1:11, 12; 3:18 and "plant" in Gen. 1:29, 30; 9:2.] **of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.** [It doesn't seem that we are supposed to think back to the time before there were any shrubs, plants, or trees on the earth (Gen. 1:11, 12). Here we could just think of shrubs and plants "of the field" that depend on rain and/or on man's cultivating the ground (including irrigation). The plants, etc. spoken of here undoubtedly include much of the vegetation that man (and the domesticated animals) would need for food (cf. Gen. 1:29, 30).

As we continue, verse 6 apparently shows God's meeting the need for *rain* on the earth. Then verse 7 shows Him creating *man to cultivate the ground* (and to do many other things, including doing much more important things, like worshipping God.)] **(6) But a mist** [The translations for the Hebrew noun (*ed*) used here vary substantially. The only other place where this noun was used in the Old Testament is Job 36:27, where the

⁶⁸ *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Eerdmans, 1990), page 150.

⁶⁹ *Genesis* (Zondervan, 2001), written with Cathi J. Fredricks.

NASB translates “mist.” In the margin it has “or, flow” for Gen. 2:6 and “or, flood” for Job 36:27. The NIV has “streams” in both verses, and in the margin “or, mist.” I would translate “rain cloud.” We’ll speak more on the meaning of this noun as we continue.] **used to rise** [It would probably be better to translate the Hebrew verb used here (*alah*) as “He causes [caused] to rise/go up.”⁷⁰] **from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.** [I’ll quote part of what Lee Irons and Meredith Kline say regarding the meaning of these verses.⁷¹ “Genesis 2:6, 7 then explains how God began to deal with these deficiencies. In verse 6 God deals with the first deficiency (lack of rain) by causing the rain clouds to form. In verse 7 He deals with the second deficiency (lack of cultivator) by creating man from the very ground he is to cultivate.⁷² Unfortunately, however, most English translations obscure this twofold solution by mistranslating verse 6 as if it referred to a substitute water supply. For example, the NASB reads, ‘But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.’ But this popular translation makes nonsense out of the flow of thought in this passage.

[In their next paragraph Irons and Kline opt for the translation “began to arise.” That translation would be reasonable, but I believe it would be better to understand the Hebrew verb as a hiphil (“caused to arise” idea), as discussed in my footnote #70. Now I’ll quote part of what they say regarding the Hebrew noun *ed* that is used at the beginning of verse 6:] ...commonly translated either ‘mist’ (NASB) or ‘streams’ (NIV), is a rare word that occurs only one other time in the Hebrew Bible. The difficulty with such obscure words is that scholars often disagree on their meanings. In a situation like this, students of lexical semantics determine meaning by using two complementary methods: by studying cognate [related] languages – Semitic languages such as Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Eblaite; and by examining the context – ultimately the most important test. In this case, both methods lead to the same conclusion: the word should be translated ‘rain-cloud’ rather than ‘mist’ or ‘streams.’

The evidence supporting the translation ‘rain-cloud’ may be summarized as follows. First, Mitchell Dahood, a leading expert in cognate studies, has argued that the Hebrew word is to be identified with an Eblaite word meaning ‘rain-cloud.’⁷³ Second, and more important, ‘rain-cloud’ finds strong corroboration from Job 36:27, the only other text where the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible. Dahood translates this verse as follows: ‘When he draws up drops from the sea, they distill as rain from his rain cloud [*ed*].’ The next verse then continues the thought quite nicely: ‘The clouds [a different Hebrew noun for clouds] pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind’ (v. 28, NIV). In fact, the ‘clouds’ of verse 28 provide a verbal link to the ‘rain-cloud’ of verse 27, thus forming a hinge connecting the first part of the rain

⁷⁰ This translation takes the Hebrew verb as a hiphil. (The form of the verb used here in Gen. 1:6 is the same for the qal and the hiphil. The qal would be translated “used to arise,” “came up” NIV, etc.) I’ll quote part of what the KB (Koehler Baumgartner) Hebrew Lexicon (Study Edition [Brill, 2001], page 830) says under meaning #4 for the hiphil of the verb *alah*: “said of something inanimate: a) to cause to rise: smoke Jud 20:38...clouds Jer 10:13; 51:16; Psalm 135:7 [Significantly, the last three verses seem to include the idea that God sends rain.]”

⁷¹ Lee Irons with Meredith Kline, *Genesis Debate*, edited by D. G. Hagopian (Crux Press, 2001), pages 230-232.

⁷² Irons and Kline have a footnote, “ ‘The...problem with its twofold reason will be given a twofold solution.’ Mark D. Futato, ‘Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen. 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen. 2:4-25 and Gen. 1:1-2:3,’ *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 60, no. 1 (Spring 1998), p. 5.”

⁷³ “Mitchell Dahood, ‘Eblaite *i-du* and Hebrew *ed*, “Rain-Cloud,”’ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 43 (1981), pp. 534-8.”

cycle (evaporation) with the second part (rain).⁷⁴”] **(7) Then [And] the LORD God formed man [Hebrew *’adam*] of dust from the ground [Hebrew *’adamah*. This noun was derived from the same Hebrew noun that *’adam* was derived from.], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.** [In the margin the NASB says “being” literally is “soul” (Hebrew *nephesh*). We have already learned from Gen. 1:27, 28 that God created man in His own image and likeness. See 1 Cor. 15:45-49. The apostle Paul quotes Gen. 2:7 in 1 Cor. 15:45. He then goes on to show that in Christ, the last Adam, we are ultimately taken to much higher existence than what Adam had before the fall.] **(8) The LORD God planted a garden toward the east [“in the east” NIV. This probably means that the garden was “in the east” with respect to the land of Israel.], in Eden [Hebrew *eden*. I’ll quote what Bruce K. Waltke says here.⁷⁵ “The likely etymology of the word is a Hebrew term meaning pleasure, delight, or lush fecundity [fruitfulness].”]; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.** [Compare Ezek. 28:13. I’ll quote part of what James E. Smith says on the Hebrew noun *gan*, the noun translated “garden” here.⁷⁶ “A garden...is a plot of ground protected by a wall or a hedge. ... The primeval garden of Gen 2-3 is perhaps the most famous garden in the OT. This garden was located in an area called Eden (...Gen 2:8, 10) and consequently came to be known as the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15; 3:23-24). A careful study of the geographical details of Gen 2 suggests that the garden was located near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is not unlikely that the original site lies under the waters of the gulf.” For more on the possible location of Eden and the garden, see below under 2:10-14.

This spectacular garden existed in the *physical* dimension, but more must be said. The primary thing that set this garden apart was that God had chosen to make it His dwelling place on the earth (with some similarity to the holy of holies in the tabernacle that was erected per God’s instructions in the days of Moses). The *spiritual* dimension of this garden was the most important dimension by far, as it always is. God’s presence (with His light, life, truth, righteousness, order, and blessings) was there in a very special sense. Adam and Eve were able to commune with God there in a glorious way in the days before the fall and to enjoy the blessings that went with having a right, life-flowing relationship with Him, participating in His light, life, truth, righteousness, order, peace, and abundant provision.] **(9) Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden** [It’s obviously very important for us to understand what is meant by the eating of the fruit of this very special tree (and of the other very special tree that is mentioned later in this verse). I’m confident that there never was, and that there never will be, a physical tree (or water, or bread, etc.) that can provide the life of God—there is no *magic* fruit that can provide life. The emphasis is on the much-more-important *spiritual* life, but *physical* life is included.⁷⁷ God Himself (God the Father, God the Son,

⁷⁴ They have a footnote, “Futato, ‘Because It Had Rained,’ p. 7.” I’ll also quote their next footnote, “Do rain-clouds arise from the *earth*? Yes: ‘He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth’ (Psalm 135:7). Futato, ‘Because It Had Rained,’ p. 8.”

⁷⁵ *Genesis* (Zondervan, 2001), pages 85, 86.

⁷⁶ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Bible Institute, 1980), pages 168, 169.

⁷⁷ The same Hebrew noun (*chayyim*) that is translated “life” here in Gen. 2:9 was also used in Gen. 2:7 (“breath of *life*”), and it is used in 3:14, 17 (“all the days of your *life*”) and in 3:22, 24 (“tree of *life*”).

and God the Holy Spirit) is the *only* source of life (spiritual life and physical life).⁷⁸ Adam and Eve enjoyed a life-flowing relationship with God in the garden.⁷⁹ A life-flowing *relationship* with God is the *only* source of spiritual life. As long as their life-flowing relationship with God continued, they were partaking of His life—they were *eating of the fruit of the tree of life*. They continued to partake of the fruit of the tree of life as long as they put God first, stayed submitted to Him from their hearts, and obeyed Him. When they lost their right, life-flowing relationship with God through listening to the devil and rebelling against God, on that day they died (like God said they would); they died spiritually,⁸⁰ and at that time the physical death process was initiated (cf., e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:24; and Rom. 5:12-21).

A Look at the Other Uses of the Words “Tree of Life” in the Bible

The “tree of life” is a symbol for the life of God. To eat of the fruit of the tree of life is to partake of the life of God. This idea is rather strongly confirmed by the subsequent uses of the words “tree of life” in the Bible. I won’t discuss Gen. 3:22, 24 here; we’ll discuss those verses that speak of the tree of life later. These words are found four times in the book of Proverbs, as a symbol for blessing. “She [wisdom] is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast [“those who lay hold of her will be blessed” (NIV)]” (Prov. 3:18). (Proverbs 3:22 says, “they [speaking of wisdom and discretion] will be life to your soul.” Proverbs 11:19 says, “He who is steadfast in

⁷⁸ See, for example, Deut. 32:39 (“...And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life.”); Neh. 9:6; John 5:26 (“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son [speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ after He became a man, but not just a man] also to have life in Himself.” The emphasis in context is on spiritual, eternal life.); John 6:26-58 (“... (40) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. ... (48) I am the bread of life. ... (50) This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. (51) I am the living bread that came down out of heaven, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever....” This symbolic language about eating the bread of life is comparable with the symbolic language in Genesis chapters 2, 3 about eating of the fruit of the tree of life.); John 6:63 (“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit [Spirit] and are life.”); John 14:6 (“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”); John 17:3 (“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Before the fall Adam and Eve had a life-flowing relationship with God.); 2 Cor. 3:6 (“[God] who has made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills [The letter of the Mosaic Law couldn’t save man in that it couldn’t solve the sin, spiritual death, problem. In fact, it intensified the sin problem in several way (see Romans chapter 7 for example); in that sense it “kills.”], but the Spirit [who comes to believers through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death] gives life.”); Gal. 6:8 (“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption [eternal death], but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”); Col. 3:4 (“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed [manifested at His second coming], then you also will be revealed [manifested] with Him in glory.”); 1 Tim. 6:13 (“I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things....”); and 1 John 5:11-13 (“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”).

⁷⁹ Adam and Eve enjoyed spiritual life, but they were in what could be called a probationary period; they did not have eternal life in the full and final sense, as it is pictured, for example, in Revelation chapters 21, 22.

⁸⁰ We could say, using the words of Eph. 4:18, that they “were excluded from the life of God.”

righteousness *will attain* to life, And he who pursues evil *will bring about* his own death,” and Prov. 12:28 says, “In the way of righteousness is life, And in *its* pathway there is no death.” The Bible is full of verses that say the same thing.) “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life...” (Prov. 11:30). “...a righteous man has a life-giving influence....”⁸¹ “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12). “A soothing tongue is a tree of life. But perversion crushes the spirit” (Prov. 15:4). There isn’t any substantial difference between eating of the fruit of the “tree of life” and drinking of the “fountain of life,” which is spoken of, for example, in Prov. 10:11; 13:14; and 14:27, but the content of some such verses is far weightier than others.

The verses in the book of Revelation that speak of the “tree(s) of life” are far more important than the verses in Proverbs to help us to understand the meaning of these words in Genesis chapters 2, 3. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). To say the same thing in different words, Christians who stay faithful to the end (until Christ returns or to the end of their lives) will partake of eternal life in God’s yet-future eternal kingdom. (The Bible often says that born-again Christians already participate in eternal life, which we certainly do, but only in a preliminary, partial [incomplete] way [see, for example, John 3:36; 5:24; and 1 John 5:11-13]. There are a large number of verses that make it clear we will not partake of eternal life in the full and final sense until the end of this age [see, for example, Luke 18:30; Rom. 6:22, 23; 2 Cor. 5:4; Gal. 6:8; and Titus 3:7].) To say that we will eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the Paradise of God yields the same end result as saying, for example, that we will inherit eternal life and enjoy all that eternal life means forever (Matt. 19:29); that we will receive eternal life and enjoy that life forever (Luke 18:30); that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life and we will experience eternal life forever (2 Cor. 5:4); that from the Spirit we will reap eternal life and abide in that life forever (Gal. 6:8); that we will take hold of the eternal life to which we were called and enjoy that life forever (1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 6:19); that we will receive the crown of life, which life we will then enjoy forever (Rev. 2:10); that Christ will not erase our names from the book of life (as He will erase the names of Christians who are living in sin if they don’t repent), but He will confess our names before His Father and before His angels (Rev. 3:6); and that the Lamb will guide us to the springs of the water of life, which we will enjoy forever (Rev. 7:17; cf. Rev. 21:6).

“Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its [new Jerusalem’s] street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds [crops] of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him” (Rev. 22:1-3). My discussion of these glorious verses will be relatively brief here; Revelation chapters 20-22 are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my paper dated November 1998. I believe it is very important to see that the “river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb” in new Jerusalem is a symbol for the Holy Spirit and His work. The Holy Spirit, who is united with God the Father and God the Son in His Person and in an eternal reign, with each of them perfectly fulfilling their roles, will be quite active dispensing eternal life and all the blessings that

⁸¹ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), page 94.

come with it (including perfect righteousness and holiness, divine order in everything, and perfect health and fulfillment) in the new earth. Instead of the curses that came upon mankind because of the fall of Adam and Eve and the many subsequent sins of man, there will only be blessings. If the river is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, which seems clear to me, then the tree(s) of life along its banks are obviously symbolic too. For the record, I believe there is an important distinction intended between those called the “nations” and those called the “bond-servants” of God in Revelation chapters 21, 22. The “bond-servants” are the members of God’s true Israel; the last words of Rev. 22:5 speak of them, saying, “and they will reign [with God] forever and ever.” The “nations” are distinguished from true Israel (cf. Rev. 15:2-4; 20:3, 4; 21:2-4); the nations won’t reign.⁸²

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). We “wash our robes” (and we keep them pure and clean) by becoming righteous and holy (and staying that way) through the atoning death of the Lamb of God in the power of the Holy Spirit through faith. To say that a person has a right to the tree of life is a symbolic way of saying that that person has a right to participate in God’s eternal life in heaven. “and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy [the book of Revelation], God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:19). To say that God will take away a person’s part from the tree of life is to say that He will deny them the right to participate in His eternal life in heaven. The only other option is eternal death, the second death of Rev. 20:14, 15.

As far back as I can remember, I have always (I’m speaking of the time since I became a born-again Christian in 1964) understood the tree of life and what it means to eat of the fruit of the tree of life in Genesis chapters 2, 3 in a symbolic/spiritual sense. This is even more clear to me than the strong symbolic/spiritual component of the words light and darkness in Genesis chapter 1.

If the tree of life in the garden was symbolic, was there no physical tree called the tree of life in the garden? I don’t know enough to dogmatically answer this question, but I don’t believe such a tree existed.⁸³ The really important thing is that the *reality* (the life of God, which was/is symbolized by the tree of life) was there in the garden of Eden. As I said, I am totally confident that there is no physical tree that can provide life, and especially spiritually life—there is no substitute for God and His Spirit. We must have a life-flowing relationship with God. Genesis 3:24 speaks of the cherubim guarding the way to the tree of life; I’m confident that the primary thing they were/are guarding (as the cherubim always are) is the way into the presence of God.

⁸² Revelation 15:2-4 are discussed in some detail on pages 244-246 of my book *The Mid-Week Rapture* and in my verse-by-verse study of Revelation 14:6-19:21 dated January 1999. My paper dated November 1998 deals extensively with the distinction between *true Israel* and *the nations*.

⁸³ Most Christians believe there was a physical tree called the tree of life in the garden. The more you consider the details, however, including the use of the words “tree of life” in the Bible, and especially in the book of Revelation; the symbolic nature of the other tree in the middle of the garden and of the serpent (who is Satan); and the strong symbolic component of the words light and darkness in Genesis chapter 1, the more the symbolic/spiritual/non-physical nature of the tree of life in the garden begins to sound all the more reasonable.

Excerpts from Henri Blocher on the Meaning of the “Tree of Life”⁸⁴

“... Let us start with the tree of life.... God gives life. Life from him, constantly renewed, is necessary in order to enjoy all the other gifts. That, we believe, is the meaning of the text. ...

... The entire Bible...excludes the idea of any supernatural effect attached to any kind of food. It does not permit us to understand in literal terms what we read about the tree of life.

[Blocher considered (and rejected) the idea that there could have been a literal tree with a “sacramental function.” In other words, though the fruit of the physical tree can’t impart life, when man meets God’s conditions, He imparts life to man when he eats of the fruit of this tree.]

... The river of living water [Blocher is speaking of the river of Rev. 22:1-5, which, as he points out, has much correspondence with the river of Ezekiel chapter 47.] undoubtedly means for him [John, who wrote the book of Revelation] the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and from the Lamb (*cf.* John 7:37-39). Similarly, in Revelation 2 and 22 the tree of life is obviously a symbol.”], **and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.** [God warned Adam in Gen. 2:17 that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would in that day die. As the sad story unfolds in chapter 3, we learn that Eve, followed by Adam, listened to the devil and joined him in his rebellion against God—they rejected the light of God and submitted to the darkness (the darkness that must, with top priority, be kept separate from the light), and that very day they died (they died spiritually that day, having lost their life-flowing relationship with God, and the physical death process was initiated). I believe the tree could have been named “the tree of the knowledge of light and darkness” without changing the revelation in any substantial way. Or it could have been named the “tree of the knowledge of life and death,” or more simply, “the tree of the knowledge of death,” or more simply yet, “the tree of death.” There were two trees in the middle of the garden.⁸⁵ One was a tree of *life*. The other was a tree of *death*. Adam and Eve had to choose between them.⁸⁶ To choose the one was to reject the other; God did not give them the option to eat from both trees. Christians may argue about the exact meaning of the words “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” but no one who believes the Bible can dispute the fact that for Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of that tree resulted in their death—it was, therefore, the tree of death.

Through rebellion Adam and Eve lost their life-flowing relationship with God, and they died spiritually. They were cast out of the garden of Eden (the place where they, for one thing, had communion with God). They were separated from God and His life, and the cherubim enforced that separation. Man in rebellion and darkness cannot have a life-flowing relationship with God. This is not to say that God totally abandoned man.

⁸⁴ *In the Beginning*, translated by David G. Preston (Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), pages 122-125.

⁸⁵ Genesis 3:3 confirms that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also in the middle of the garden. These trees were *in the middle* of the garden because they were the most important trees in the garden; their importance far overshadowed all the other trees in the garden. They were, in fact, much more important than the physical garden itself. By saying that these two trees are to be understood in a non-physical, symbolic sense, we are not at all detracting from the supreme importance of these two trees or wandering off into a world of unreality. We are interpreting words in the highest possible sense, and we are dealing with the highest possible realities. The words “tree of life” and “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” when understood in a symbolic sense, communicate vital truth, and the communication takes place in a powerful, relatively easy to grasp way.

⁸⁶ We, their offspring, have to choose between the two trees too.

Clearly He didn't, and He already had a plan (before He created the world) to eventually restore spiritual life to man (not to all men, but to those who would submit to His plan of salvation), and even to take believers to a place much higher than what Adam and Eve had before the fall.⁸⁷

Before Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate of the forbidden fruit (we'll discuss the nature of that rebellion—we know quite a bit about it—under Genesis chapter 3), they knew only *good*. The creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 emphasized that everything that God created was *good*. We discussed in some detail, however, (under Gen. 1:1-2:3) that the *evil* of darkness (speaking of darkness in a symbolic sense, which includes sin, spiritual death, and Satan and his highly organized kingdom of rebels) was very much on the scene, and that the darkness must be kept separate from the light. Adam initially knew *good* in the biblical sense that he always willed, thought, and did good, and in the biblical sense that he always experienced good (the blessings that came from having a right, life-flowing relationship with God). The *good* goes with the *light* of God, which includes His truth, His righteousness, and His *life*.

Through rebelling and eating/partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve increased their knowledge, as the devil had said they would, but the knowledge they gained was all *evil* (bad). Adam and Eve came to know *evil* in the biblical sense of thinking, willing, and doing evil (they lost their innocence), and in the biblical sense of knowing the curses, consequences, and penalties that always come with rebellion against God. They came to know the *darkness* and *death* that go with sin and rebellion. Before eating of the sinful (forbidden) fruit Adam and Eve knew only good. Through eating the fruit, they came to know evil. Before eating of the sinful (forbidden) fruit, they had a life-flowing relationship with God and all the attendant blessings. Through eating the forbidden fruit they *died*.

I'll quote Deut. 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants."⁸⁸ This verse, which conveys a dominant biblical theme, is

⁸⁷ It must be understood that the rebellion of Adam resulted in the death (the spiritual and physical death) of his descendents (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:12-15; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22). His descendents were born outside of the garden; they didn't have a life-flowing relationship with God. But new-covenant salvation in the blood of Christ and the outpoured Spirit makes spiritual life available to believers. A large part of the message of the gospel of the new covenant is that Christ has defeated sin, death, and Satan and his kingdom of darkness through His atoning death. "...that through death He [Christ] might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Old-covenant believers had salvation, but they had to wait for Christ to solve the sin/death problem in His atoning death and resurrection before they could enter into many of the benefits of that salvation. For example, though the Spirit of God was active under the old covenant, the new birth and the new-covenant dimension of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit were not available yet. Also, when old-covenant believers died, they went to Sheol/Hades (the kingdom of death), but for them it was not a place of punishment (cf., e.g., Luke 16:19-31). Once Christ had conquered death, He took the old-covenant believers to heaven (cf., e.g., Heb. 11:39, 40; 12:14; these verses from the book of Hebrews are discussed on pages 166, 167 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*).

⁸⁸ The fact that sin brings death for God's people is a common theme throughout the Bible. See, for example, Ezek. 18:1-32 (I'll quote 18:20a, "The person who sins will die."); Ezek. 33:10-20 (I'll quote 33:11, 18, 19, "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the LORD GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?' (18) When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. (19) But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and

quite parallel in meaning with the message God gave Adam and Eve in the garden by teaching them about the two trees and warning them that they must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they stay faithful, they will continue to live—they will continue to partake of the fruit of the tree of life. But, on the other hand, if they rebel and choose to follow the devil in his rebellion against God and eat of the forbidden fruit, on that very day, they will forfeit life and die. How could it be otherwise. You can't be in rebellion against God and live in peace with Him. We shouldn't be surprised when things don't work right when we rebel against, doubt, and/or ignore the Creator.

As with the "tree of life," I don't believe there was a physical "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the garden, but there is no need to be dogmatic on this point. I understand these trees in a symbolic sense. To eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to lose one's innocence and to rebel against God and suffer the consequences. If such physical trees did exist, they would have been very subordinate to the reality of a right, life-flowing relationship with God in the light, or the reality of the awful alternative of rebelling against God and siding in with the devil and his kingdom of darkness and death.

Excerpts from Henri Blocher on the Meaning of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil"⁸⁹

"If the tree of life is figurative, the same must be said for its counterpart, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ... No parallel for the second tree has been found outside the Bible. The idea that it was an apple tree rests solely on a Latin word-play, *malus/malum* (evil/apple)...." (pages 125, 126). I'll only quote a small part of what Blocher goes on to say here.

"Several more cautious writers bring out the dimension of experience in the Hebrew concept of knowledge. They propose a very simple explanation: God forbade his creature to taste evil in the concrete manner that he was already tasting good.⁹⁰ What God wanted was to protect them from knowing evil as well as good. [I agree with this view. God also demanded, of course,

practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them."); Romans 6:16, 21-23 ("Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience [to God and His word] resulting in righteousness? (21) Therefore what benefit [fruit] were you then deriving [having] from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (22) But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive [have] your benefit [fruit], resulting in sanctification [an abiding state of holiness] and the outcome, eternal life. (23) For the wages of sin is death [If you serve sin, when it comes time to collect your wages, you will receive eternal death (no matter what the devil tells you).], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."); Rom. 8:13 ("for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds [works] of the body [of the old man], you will live." [See Gal. 5:19-21; 6:8]); James 5:19, 20 ("My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death...."); and 1 John 5:16 ("If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.").

⁸⁹ *In the Beginning*, pages 125-133.

⁹⁰ "Lagrange, 'L' innocence et le peche', *RB* 6, p. 344; E. J. Young, *Genesis 3*, pp. 40f."

that Adam and Eve truly serve Him as Creator and God from the heart (in faith), which included trusting Him and obeying Him—without these things the divine order of God’s kingdom is violated. It wasn’t reasonable for Eve to accept the devil’s slanderous accusations against God and His goodness. Adam and Eve were innocent before the fall, but they were not ignorant of what it meant to rebel against God or of the promised penalty for eating of the forbidden fruit—they didn’t have any reasonable excuse for their rebellion.] ... [This interpretation] founders on attributing to God the knowledge in question. God does not ‘know’ evil in the sense suggested; he remains radically outside it (*cf.* Jas. 1:13)” (page 130). I agree that “God does not ‘know’ evil in the sense suggested” and that “he remains radically outside it” (God doesn’t know evil by doing evil [sinning] or by experiencing evil as a consequence of His sin [since He hasn’t sinned, for one thing]), but I believe Blocher’s objection misses the mark. He is basing this objection on Gen. 3:22, but I believe he misinterprets that verse. We’ll discuss the interpretation of Gen. 3:22 under that verse.

Blocher opts for the view that the “forbidden fruit” represents “*autonomy*, particularly *moral autonomy*, the ability to decide oneself about good and evil: ‘It is a higher knowledge which towers above good and evil, and which decides about good and evil’⁹¹” (page 132). He discusses this view at length. Although I’m not satisfied that this interpretation says enough, I believe that what this view says is included in what it meant for Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. I’ll quote part of what Blocher further says regarding this view on pages 132, 133. ...] **(10) Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden [The garden was in Eden.]; and from there it divided and became four rivers. (11) The name of the first is Pishon [I’ll quote what the *Bible Background Commentary - Old Testament* says here.⁹² “Analysis of sand patterns in Saudi Arabia and satellite photography have helped identify an old riverbed running northeast through Saudi Arabia from the Hijaz Mountains near Medina to the Persian Gulf in Kuwait near the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. This would be a good candidate for the Pishon River.”]; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. [I’ll quote what the *Bible Background Commentary* says here.⁹³ “Perhaps because gold is mentioned in relation to Havilah, it is named in several other passages (Gen. 10:7; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7; 1 Chron. 1:9). It has most often been placed in western Saudi Arabia next to Medina along the Red Sea, an area that does produce gold, bdellium and onyx. Genesis 10:7 describes Havilah as the ‘brother’ of Ophir, a region also known for its wealth in gold.”] (12) The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. (13) The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. (14) The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria [“it runs along the east side of Asshur” NIV]. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. [I’ll quote part of what Carl Schultz says regarding the possible location of Eden.⁹⁴ (Also see above under 2:8.) “The precise location of Eden is difficult. While the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers can be located [and the land of Assyria/Ashur], there is general uncertainty as to the other two rivers, the Pishon and Gihon. However, an area near the head of the Persian Gulf seems a likely possibility.” This is a common view, and it could be correct, but the reader should be aware that the Tigris and Euphrates flow in a**

⁹¹ “R. de Vaux, *RB* 56 (1949), p. 303.”

⁹² John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas (Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), page 31.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, page 31.

⁹⁴ Article on “Eden,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (Moody Bible Institute, 1980), page 646.

southerly direction toward the Persian Gulf, not away from it. There is widespread agreement that the four rivers would have flowed outward from the garden of Eden.

I'll quote part of what H. C. Leupold says on the location of Eden.⁹⁵ He mentions Armenia and Babylonia as the two most likely candidates, but he says that Babylonia seems unlikely in that it doesn't fit the description of the rivers described in Gen. 2:10-14. "Babylonia...seems unlikely, because the river pattern described in Gen. 2:10-14 does not agree with this claim. At least two of the streams mentioned in this Scripture (the Tigris and the Euphrates) are known to have been in days of old, as they are to this day, near to one another and springing from the Armenian [emphasis mine] highlands. ... Since no such set of streams can be identified anywhere (one major stream dividing into four branches), there is great likelihood that they are correct who allow for the possibility that some major topographical change, such as might have been wrought by the great Flood, may have taken place. The only helpful fact left is that the Tigris and Euphrates still originate in the same general area, as well as do some minor streams (such as Araxes and Murat) that would come close to making up the original four mentioned in the text. For the claim seems irrefutable that the picture given in vv. 10-12 is that of a single strong stream...subdividing into four branches which go off in the direction of the four points of the compass. No comparable situations that can be discovered correspond geographically to what is depicted here."

After Adam and Eve fell and were expelled from the garden of Eden (having lost their life-flowing relationship with God), the *physical* garden of Eden may have continued to exist on the earth for a while, but if it did, man was clearly barred from entering it (Gen. 3:24). That physical location still exists on the earth today, but it ceased being special when God withdrew His special presence from there.] **(15) Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.** [This was the same placing of Adam in the garden that was spoken of in 2:8. Repetition was typical for biblical Hebrew. Genesis 2:15 gives added information regarding why God placed man in the garden. Man wasn't created to sit around doing nothing; work that is done for God and in the will of God is a *good* and necessary thing. God has good plans for those who submit to Him from their hearts and obey Him. Ultimately we will reign with Him in new Jerusalem, in eternal glory. There won't be any loafing in heaven—we were created and saved for a much higher purpose.] **(16) The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; (17) but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."** [See under Gen. 2:9.] **(18) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable [In the margin the NASB has, "[helper] Lit. *corresponding to* [him]."] for him."** [Compare 1 Cor. 11:8, ⁹⁶; 1 Tim. 2:13. The brief account of the creation of man in Gen. 1:27-31 ("God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them" Gen. 1:27) skipped many details that Genesis chapter 2 supplies.] **(19) Out of the ground** [The same Hebrew noun for "ground" (*'adamah*) that was used for the creation of the body of man in Gen. 2:7 is used here.] **the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.** [Genesis chapter 1 informed us that the birds and animals were created *before* man (male and female) was created, and I don't believe there was

⁹⁵ "Eden (Garden of)," *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (Zondervan, 1975, 1976), page 200.

⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my paper dated March 2000.

any intention to deny that sequence here in chapter 2. The emphasis of chapter 2 is on man and the garden. The birds and animals are introduced only incidentally in chapter 2 because of their relationship with Adam (relative to Adam's naming them and to finding a "helper suitable for" Adam), not to specify *when* they were created in relation to Adam or Eve. The NIV, for example, solves the problem of sequence with its translation, "Now the LORD GOD had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air." I prefer just saying that I don't believe there was any intention here in Genesis chapter 2 to deny the sequence given in Genesis chapter 1.

For man to be given the assignment of naming the animals certainly confirmed his dominion over them that was mentioned in Gen. 1:26, 28. These verses (Gen. 2:19, 20) tend to confirm the point that I made under Gen. 1:28, that before the fall there was total peace between man and the animals, birds, etc. They also tend to confirm the point that the birds and animals were at total peace with one another at that time. They were eating vegetation, not one another.] **(20) The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for ["corresponding to"] him. (21) So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs [The NIV has "took one of the man's ribs," but in the margin has, "Or, took part of the man's side." I'll quote a paragraph from what U. Cassuto says here.⁹⁷ "He did not take the bone alone, as the exegetes usually understand the verse; the hard bone would not have been suitable material for the fashioning of the tender and delicate body of the woman. The meaning of the text is that the Creator took together with the bone also the flesh attached to it, and from the flesh He formed the woman's flesh, and from the bone her bones.... Proof of this we find in the words of the man (v. 23): This at last is bone of my bones AND FLESH OF MY FLESH." For the record, the idea that you still hear once in a while that man has one less rib than the woman isn't true.] and closed up the flesh at that place. (22) The LORD God fashioned into a woman [Hebrew *'ishshah*] the rib [The NIV has, "made a woman from the rib," but in the margin has, "Or, part."] which He had taken from the man [*'adam*], and brought her to the man [*'adam*]. [Compare 1 Cor. 11:8.] (23) The man [*'adam*] said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh [cf. Gen. 29:14]; she shall be called woman [*'ishshah*], because she was taken out of Man [*'ish*]." (24) For this reason a man [*'ish*] shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife [*'ishshah*]; and they shall become one flesh. [It is significant that Christ quoted these words when answering a question about divorce (see Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). Also see Eph. 5:22-33⁹⁸; 1 Cor. 6:16.] (25) And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. [These words help set the stage for Genesis chapter 3. Adam and Eve were naked and they were not ashamed, and rightly so, in that context of innocence. After they had rebelled against God by listening to the devil and eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, however, many things**

⁹⁷ *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part One [Magnes Press, 1989], page 134.

⁹⁸ Ephesians 5:22-33 are discussed on pages 174-178 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Ephesians 5:25-27 are important verses dealing with holiness.

changed, including the fact that they were then aware of, and ashamed of, their nakedness (Gen. 3:7, 10, 11). They had tasted and entered the sphere (dimension) of darkness and death; it was bad, including the fact that they now had the knowledge of guilt and shame.]

GENESIS CHAPTER 3

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. [The most common view among evangelicals is that Satan was possessing, or at least speaking through, the serpent. I could live with that view (but it would be difficult for me); I believe it was intended (by the ultimate Author) that the serpent be equated with Satan; the serpent was a symbol for Satan.⁹⁹ The one we call Satan and the devil was created by God—he was created good, but he rebelled and fell through pride (1 Tim. 3:6); he was created and fell before Gen. 1:1; he was not part of the creation pictured in Genesis chapters 1, 2, which was pronounced good.

Although God undoubtedly created literal serpents in the creation that is spoken of in Genesis chapters 1, 2, the Hebrew noun (*nachash*) translated “serpent” here in Gen. 3:1 was not used in those chapters. (Those literal serpents would have been part of what God pronounced good.) God speaks to the serpent in Gen. 3:14, 15; the fact that what He says to him in 3:15 clearly refers to Satan (not to a literal serpent) provides one of several strong reasons to equate the serpent with Satan. (What God says to the serpent in Gen. 3:14 fits Satan well too.) Revelation 12:8 (with 12:3, 4, 7-9) and Rev. 20:2 provide an equally strong reason for equating the two: “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev. 12:8); “And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil

⁹⁹ I’ll quote what Bruce K. Waltke says here (*Genesis* [Zondervan, 2001], page 90). “... Although [the serpent is] not named here, he is the adversary of God and humanity, called the Satan (Hebrew *satan* [‘adversary, persecutor, or accuser’] in the Old Testament and the devil (*diabolos*, the Greek equivalent) in the New Testament. He originates in heaven, standing outside earth’s natural order. [Waltke has a footnote here, “Seemingly (a mystery) he does not belong to this creation, which is good.” He was created and fell before Gen. 1:1; he was not, therefore, part of God’s good creation spoken of in Gen. 1:1-2:3.] He is malevolent and wiser than humans, bringing them under his rule. [Satan’s wisdom didn’t give man an excuse for the fall; Adam and Eve had been given all they needed to remain faithful to God.] He knows divine matters (3:5) [Waltke has a footnote here, “This inference becomes explicit in later revelations (Job 1:6-12; Zech. 3:1-2).] and uses speech to introduce confusion. [Waltke has another footnote, “Cf. John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9. Despite his power, he will be destroyed by Christ and his seed (Gen. 3:15; Luke 10:18-19; Rom. 16:20.”)].”

I’ll quote several sentences from what James Oliver Buswell says on this topic. (*Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 [Zondervan, 1962], pages 264, 265. Dr. Buswell was a founding theologian of Covenant Theological Seminary, where I attended. I never had any classes with Dr. Buswell. He had pretty much retired before I started taking classes there, but based on what I know of him, I have a lot of respect for him. For one thing, he was the primary one who introduced the teaching of the mid-week rapture at Covenant Seminary. Also, he put a lot more emphasis on Christian holiness than most Calvinists do.) “The tempter in the Genesis record is an evil personal intelligence. The words, ‘the Serpent,’ I suggest should be read as a proper name [Buswell has a footnote, “Compare Isaiah 65:25 and Revelation 20:3 where the ‘Serpent’ is a person. In this suggestion I am not for a moment questioning the inerrancy of the record.], or as a title functioning as a proper name. The Genesis account has nothing to say about a biological reptile. ‘The Serpent’ is not said to be *one* of the ‘beasts of the field’.... Snakes do not literally eat dirt (Gen. 3:14; Isa. 65:25), but to be prostrated, and to eat dust, is an ancient metaphor for the humiliation of an enemy. ... ‘The Serpent’ is Satan, and figures throughout the Bible as the arch-enemy of God and man, the instigator of all kinds of evil.”

and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2).¹⁰⁰ Revelation 12:4 indicates that a *third* of the angels followed the devil in his rebellion against God. (This important information is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.)

As we discussed under Gen. 1:2-5, Satan’s initial rebellion took place before Gen. 1:1, 2. God’s judgment of that rebellion led to the sorry state of the earth pictured in Gen. 1:2. The use of the word “serpent” in Isa. 27:1 also serves as a rather strong confirmation that the serpent is to be equated with Satan. So does 2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Isa. 65:25.¹⁰¹ Under Genesis chapter 2, I quoted extensively from Henri Blocher on the meaning of the two special trees in the middle of the garden of Eden. I’ll also quote extensively from him regarding the concept that the serpent was Satan at the end of this chapter, after we finish the verse-by-verse discussion of chapter 3. You might want to read that excerpt now.

It’s very clear that the serpent already was an extremely evil being (and also quite competent) when we first read about him here in Genesis chapter 3; he already was at war with God (and man).¹⁰² The serpent’s being a symbol for Satan fits perfectly with what I said earlier in this paper (and in the Extended Notes) regarding the strong symbolic/spiritual component of Genesis chapters 1-3. I’ll list the most relevant points here: The strong symbolic/spiritual components of the words *darkness* and *light* in Genesis chapter 1 is significant (where *darkness* symbolizes sin, Satan and his kingdom, and the consequences and penalties for sin and *light* symbolizes God and His life, truth, righteousness, peace, order, and blessings). The emphasis on the need to separate the darkness from the light and to keep them separated in Genesis chapter 1 is a dominant biblical theme, and it helps confirm the symbolic/spiritual component of the words light and darkness. The state of the earth pictured in Gen. 1:2, with the *darkness*, chaos, absence of life, with water covering everything had undoubtedly resulted from God’s earlier judgment (before Gen. 1:1) of the rebellion led by Satan that at least included the earth. The fact that Adam and Eve were informed that they must *subdue* the earth (Gen. 1:28) is significant, especially since the animals were at peace with man and with one another before the fall of man (according to Gen. 1:26-31). Also, at that time, Adam and Eve were at peace with the environment; they had no problems with things like tornadoes, droughts, bad ground, weeds, pests, sicknesses, etc. The enemies that Adam and Eve needed to resist and subdue were in the spiritual dimension. They had to keep separate from the darkness and evil; they had to refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The *evil* fruit of that tree (like the darkness) symbolized sin

¹⁰⁰ Revelation 12:4, 7-9 picture the devil and his angels being cast down to the earth (from their privileged position in heavenly places) at the time Christ returns to judge the world in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week. (Revelation chapter 12 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my book *The Mid-Week Rapture*.) Revelation 20:2 shows that the devil will be bound throughout the millennial kingdom.

¹⁰¹ The fact that “dust will be the serpents food” (Isa. 65:25) when the other animals are transformed (“the wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox”) fits well with the idea that the serpent is Satan; eating dust speaks symbolically of his overthrow (cf. Isa. 27:1). It is significant that Isa. 11:8 (with 11:6-8) shows that the literal snakes/serpents will be transformed along with the other animals for the millennial kingdom.

¹⁰² It must be emphasized that there never was any doubt about who is going to win this war. The Bible confirms from beginning to end that God is God; He is in sovereign control; and He definitely limits what He permits Satan to do. God knew that man was going to fall, and He had made plans before the creation of the world to send His Son to save man (those who would submit in faith to His plan of salvation) and to overthrow, judge, and remove Satan and all who follow him.

and the consequences and penalties for sin; to eat of that forbidden fruit was to join Satan and his kingdom in rebellion against God.

If these points are accepted, it is not at all unexpected or surprising for Satan to come on the scene here in Genesis chapter 3. Most Christians, however, understand Genesis chapters 1, 2 in a way that doesn't leave hardly any room for the fall of Satan, or his relationship with the earth, or God's (initial, partial) judgment of his rebellion. They understand Genesis chapter 1 in a way that doesn't even mention the *creation* of the cherubim, angels, etc. They typically say that their creation is included in Gen. 1:1, but you certainly have to strain to see their creation there. And if you believe that there were only five twenty-four hour days and some hours between the time God began His creation of everything in Gen. 1:1 and the time He created Adam on the sixth day (which is a widely held viewpoint), you certainly don't leave much time for the righteous existence of the high-level being who became Satan and the angels who followed him before they fell.

Satan (along with sin, death [spiritual death and physical death], and darkness) did not have authority over Adam and Eve until after they had sinned. Satan (along with sin, death, and darkness) gained authority (but not total dominion) over man (which includes Adam, Eve, and all their offspring) through the sin of Adam and Eve.

The Hebrew noun (*arum*) that is translated "crafty" here in 3:1 is used in a negative (evil) sense, as it was in Job 5:12; 15:5. (This Hebrew noun was sometimes used in a positive sense in the Old Testament, where it was translated "prudent" four times and "prudent man" four times by the NASB.) The translation of the NASB at the beginning of 3:1 (which is essentially the same as the NIV, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals") tends to leave what I consider to be a wrong impression. This translation tends to communicate the idea that the beasts of the field were crafty too, but less crafty than the serpent. I don't believe the author/Author intended to include the idea that the beasts of the field were "crafty." I prefer a translation like, "Now the serpent was subtle apart from [in the sense of "unlike"] the wild beasts of the field which the LORD God had made."

We'll discuss this rather important point to some extent here and then further under Gen. 3:14. Many have noted that the words of 3:14 ("Cursed are you more than [The Hebrew behind "more than" here and later in the verse is the preposition *min*.] all cattle, And more than [*min*] every beast of the field" NASB), which God spoke to the serpent, build on these words at the beginning of 3:1 that compare (or you could say contrast) the serpent with the beasts of the field. (The NASB of 3:1 starts out, "Now the serpent was more crafty than." The Hebrew behind "more...than" here in 3:1, as in 3:14, is the preposition *min*. As I mentioned, I prefer a translation for Gen. 3:1 like, "Now the serpent was subtle apart from [in the sense of "unlike"] the wild beasts of the field, where *min* is translated "apart from" instead of "more than.") There is widespread agreement that the idea intended in 3:14 is *not* that the serpent was cursed more than the cattle and beasts of the field, but that the serpent was singled out for the curse and there was no mention of the cattle and/or beasts of the field being cursed in 3:14. The one who was crafty/subtle and who manifested great hatred for God in his temptation of Eve was singled out for the curse.

Commenting on the use of the Hebrew preposition *min* in Gen. 3:14, the BDB Hebrew Lexicon¹⁰³ says, “cursed *above* all cattle [“cursed above” is comparable in meaning with “cursed...more than all cattle” of the NASB] (but without implying any judgment whether other cattle are cursed likewise [my underlining for emphasis]).” Applying that same reasoning in Gen. 3:1, I wouldn’t object to the translation “the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field” if we could agree that we are not implying that the other beasts were crafty/subtle too.

I’ll quote a few sentences from what Edward J. Young says here.¹⁰⁴ “... The snake was crafty. Its wisdom was not something good but something evil. ... The word ‘subtil’ [This is the word used in the KJV.] is evidently used with respect to what follows, where the words spoken by the serpent tempt the woman and lead her into moral evil. It is this fact that throws the true light upon the meaning. And in the light of this fact it would seem that the subtlety is something which could belong only to a responsible being. No mere snake could of itself display the craftiness and cunning which manifest themselves in the subsequent discourse with Eve. [Young believes Satan spoke through a literal serpent.] When therefore the Bible asserts that the serpent is subtle it is taking the first step, it would seem, in going behind the scene and letting us know that there is more here than meets the eye. A subtlety is at work such as does not belong to [literal] snakes. That much, it appears, we must grant, if we are to do justice to what the Bible says. The word ‘subtil’ is the first hint that we have to deal with more than a snake [At least this is the first hint in Genesis chapter 3; as I mentioned, I believe there are several such very strong “hints” in Genesis chapters 1, 2.]” **And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”** [In the margin the NASB has or “every” instead of “any.” I believe the translation “every” is better; or we could translate, “not eat from all the trees in the garden.” I’ll quote part of what H. C. Leupold says here.¹⁰⁵ “We must definitely reject [the translation] ‘not from any’.... The exaggeration [that Adam and Eve were prohibited from eating from any of the trees in the garden] would be too gross and crude. The devil would have completely overshoot his mark and roused a feeling of resentment at the course insinuation. Therefore A. V. [KJV (also the NKJV)] is correct: ‘not from every.’ Cf. K. S. [Koenig’s Syntax] 352s.”

Satan knew, of course, that Adam and Eve had been prohibited from eating of the *one* tree in the center of the garden. He wanted to direct Eve’s attention to that one tree; he wanted Eve to begin to think of God as a withholder, a withholder of something that was very good, so good in fact that everything else in the garden was garbage in comparison with the fruit of this one very special, forbidden tree.

We must remind ourselves at the outset that Satan was (and still is) a liar (cf. John 8:44) and a deceiver (cf. Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). Although Satan mixes in elements of truth when it’s convenient (like they say, if you want an animal to eat poison you mix it with some good food), we certainly cannot assume that something is true because he says it, including what he says to Eve. Even though this first question to Eve was stated in a way that tended to question the goodness of God, Satan certainly knew that Eve wouldn’t be challenged much by this preliminary question.

Based on what is revealed here (there could be a lot we don’t know; we are dependent on how much God chose to reveal to us; I’m confident that He always reveals as much

¹⁰³ Page 582, 6b.

¹⁰⁴ *Genesis 3* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), pages 9, 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Wartburg Press, 1942), page 144.

as we need to know, even if we would frequently like to know more), Eve may not have done anything wrong to answer the serpent's first question. (It could be, however, that she was responsible for adding the words about *not touching* the forbidden fruit recorded in Gen. 3:3; if so, that seems like a minor problem.) On the other hand, Eve's communicating with the serpent, or even allowing Satan to remain in her presence, may have involved incredible stupidity and rebellion against God. It depends on how much she knew about Satan to begin with. If she knew that he was a malicious enemy of God and the prince of darkness, then she had no right to talk with him. She could have called on God for help (or perhaps on Adam for a start).

It's very clear that when Eve continued to listen to the serpent after he started his unrestrained attack against the truthfulness and goodness of God, starting in Gen. 3:4, she was far out of order and heading for a fall of gigantic proportion. She had no right whatsoever to listen to such attacks against the only God and the Creator, who had demonstrated nothing but perfection and goodness in His creation and in His dealings with her (and with Adam). If all we knew about Eve's sin was the following, we would know enough to understand the extreme seriousness of her rebellion, for which there was no excuse: By accepting the devil's challenge to eat of the forbidden fruit, she had to first accept as true the evil, malicious, blasphemous things the devil said against God (she had to agree that God was a liar; she had to agree that He had been withholding from Adam and her that which was good for them because of His own self-centered interests—if they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would gain wisdom and be like God); she had to side in with the devil in his rebellion against God; and she had to do what she knew she had been forbidden to do by the very Word of God on penalty of death.

The Bible says that Eve was *deceived* (2 Cor. 11:3; Tim. 2:14; cf. Gen. 3:13); in some ways she was. The bait (forbidden fruit) that Satan used looked so good to her that she (like a fish) took the bait and ran with it; she took the fruit and ate it, but it should be obvious, based on what I have said, that her sin involved full-scale, willful, informed rebellion against God and His word and a siding-in-with His enemy, which involved a lot more than just being *deceived*.

I'll say more about the specific nature of the forbidden fruit (the details regarding the bait the devil used to tempt Adam and Eve) as we continue,¹⁰⁶ but there are quite a few different ideas regarding what the bait for that original sin was, and I don't believe we know enough to be dogmatic on that specific point. As I indicated in the last paragraph, however, we really don't have to know more than what I have mentioned already to understand the essence of the rebellion and fall of Eve.] **(2) The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; (3) but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden [referring to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' "** [See under Gen. 3:1.] **(4) The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! (5) For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God** [The KJV has "gods" instead of "God."¹⁰⁷],

¹⁰⁶ See the excerpts that deal with this issue from Henri Blocher and from others, along with my comments in brackets (starting on page 70).

¹⁰⁷ The NKJV has "God." The plural Hebrew noun *elohim* can be translated "gods," and some commentators opt for that translation here. The NASB translates *elohim* "gods" 204 times in the Old Testament, but it translates "God" 2,326 times. I believe the translation "God" is correct here. For one thing *elohim* was used earlier in this verse for God.

knowing good and evil.” [Talk about a direct, unrestrained, non-subtle, vicious attack against God: “He is a liar! And a lot more about Him is bad too! But don’t worry Eve, I’m here to help you against that mean, oppressive, manipulative, withholding, lying God. Listen to me, Eve, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. You will be exalted to a new dimension; you will have the extreme privilege of knowing good and evil.” Adam and Eve did not become more like God by eating the forbidden fruit; they lost their innocence and became more like the devil. As we discussed under Gen. 2:9, 16, the knowledge they gained turned out to be evil. They had known the good, and all that was “added” to them was the knowledge of evil. We shouldn’t expect good to come from doing evil. The apostle Paul hated the charge that some of his opponents falsely and slanderously brought against him, that he taught “Let us do evil that good may come” (see Rom. 3:8).

By eating the fruit of this tree, which can also be called the tree of death, they died as God had said they would. (They died spiritually that day, and the physical death process was initiated in them.) God hadn’t been withholding that which was good after all. He was/is a good God! He isn’t a liar! He will, however, let His people be tested, and rightly so. Let’s wake up if we need to and decide once and for all that God’s ways are always right; our sin is always against God and evil; it *never* works for our good, but always for our evil. Sin and the devil are the liars!

God clearly knows *good*, and in some limited ways, but only in some limited ways, He knows *evil*. (He does, of course, know all about evil, but not in an experiential way.) In one sense God had already experienced evil through the rebellion of Satan and his followers that took place before Satan tempted Eve, but He did not know evil in the sense that Adam and Eve came to know it through doing evil. And He did not know evil by suffering the consequences/penalty for doing evil that rebels know. (For Adam and Eve that included having guilt feelings. As far as I know, the devil doesn’t have guilt feelings.) It seems to me that it was a total lie for Satan to tell Eve that she and Adam would become like God, knowing good and evil. “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

Genesis 3:22 is relevant to this discussion; it includes the words, “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil....’ ” As we will discuss in some detail under 3:22-24, I believe these words of God were intended in a sarcastic, ironic sense to mock the idea that Adam and Eve would actually accept the devil’s lie that they could gain something good and become like God through rebelling against Him and believing His lying accuser, who called Him a liar. God took these words from what the devil had said (in Gen. 3:5), “you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” He did not intend these words to reflect reality/truth.] **(6) When the woman saw that the tree was good for food** [The devil had told Eve “that the tree was good for food.” That was a total lie! The fruit on that tree *wasn’t* good; that forbidden fruit was deadly. Eve was deceived (with no excuse) by accepting that lie into her heart and mind. The devil has a million lies (or more) for those who will listen to him. We are not

The Hebrew plural participle translated “knowing” (here in Gen. 3:5) apparently ties to the plural “you” used here, which refers to Adam and Eve. Plurals are used throughout Gen. 3:2-5 in that Adam was included with Eve in what was being said: “we may eat” (3:2); “You [plural] shall not eat from it or touch it, or you [plural] will die” (Gen. 3:3); “You [plural] surely will not die!” (Gen. 3:4); “in the day you [plural] eat from it your [the eyes of you (plural)] will be opened, and you [plural] will be like God, knowing [plural] good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

supposed to listen to him; we have no right to listen to him; it constitutes rebellion against God to listen to the devil; we don't have to listen to him. He tries to make sin look good; it *never* is good. Sin may be fun for a while, and it may make a person feel good for a while, but it *never* is good, and it doesn't bring real good to the one sinning.

Eve *saw* the things spoken of in verse 6 (at least for the most part) with the *eyes* of her heart, not with her physical eyes. This is like verse 7, which speaks of the *eyes* of Adam and Eve being opened and their then knowing that they were naked. It wasn't that their physical eyes were then opened, but that (after they had fallen through eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) they then knew evil, including the fact that they then knew that they were naked, and they knew shame and were afraid of God because of their nakedness (see verses 8-10).], **and that it was a delight to the eyes** [See 1 John 2:15-17 (1 John 2:16 mentions "the lust of the eyes."); James 1:14, 15 (James 1:15 mentions being "enticed by his own lust." A. T. Robertson points out that the Greek verb behind "enticed" was derived from a word meaning "bait," "to catch fish by bait or to hunt with snares...").¹⁰⁸ The forbidden fruit (the bait the devil used) was a delight to the eyes because Eve had accepted the lie in her heart and mind that the forbidden fruit was good. Sinful fruit *never* is good!], **and that the tree was desirable to make one wise** [That was a lie too! The only "wisdom" she gained was the experiential knowledge of evil (of doing evil and experiencing the evil consequences of doing evil); that isn't wisdom.], **she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** [This certainly is a brief account of the rebellion of Adam in that the Bible speaks so much more of his rebellion than Eve's. For one thing, Adam was the authority figure. The apostle Paul spoke of the serious, far-reaching consequences of the transgression/rebellion of Adam. In Rom. 5:12-21, for example, he shows that it was Adam's sin that caused the death of all his offspring, very much including spiritual death.

Paul makes the point in 1 Tim. 2:14 that "it was not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression." I believe it is important to see that Adam was *deceived* too in some ways. It seems clear that he thought that good would come from eating of the forbidden fruit, or he wouldn't have eaten it. And it is quite clear that he was rebelling against God and following the devil just as much as Eve was, and he, like Eve, had no real excuse. The fact that Adam was influenced by Eve certainly didn't constitute a legitimate excuse.

It's clear that *pride* was involved in the temptation and transgression of Adam and Eve. Satan, who had fallen through pride, knew how to appeal to the pride of man. I'll quote part of what James Montgomery Boice says under the heading "Pride" when commenting on Gen. 3:1-6.¹⁰⁹ "What lay at the root of the woman's determination to eat the forbidden fruit and give some to her husband, Adam, if it was not pride? What lay at the root of Adam's determination to go his own way rather than adhere to the path God placed before him, if this was not pride? In the woman's case it was the conviction that she knew what was better for herself and her husband than God did. God had said that the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring death. But she was convinced by her own empirical observation— after Satan had raised the doubt— that the tree would actually be good for her and that God was mistaken. [More must be said. In the eyes of Eve, God was more than "mistaken"; He had to be a no-good liar if the devil was right. Eve manifested pride,

¹⁰⁸ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. VI (Broadman Press, 1933), page 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Baker, 1982, 1998), pages 168, 169.

unbelief, and rebellion in her transgression.] In the man's case pride is also present, for he repeated the sin of Satan, saying in effect, 'I will cast off God's rule. I am too great to be bound by it. I shall declare myself autonomous. I will be like the Most High' (cf. Isa. 14:14). [As I mentioned, Adam was deceived too, even if it is true that his rebellion was on a more serious level than Eve's.]

How terrible pride is! And how pervasive; for, of course, it did not vanish in the death of the first man and woman. Pride [with unbelief] lies at the heart of our sinful race. It is the 'center' of immorality, 'the utmost evil,' that which 'leads to every other vice,' as C. S. Lewis warns us.¹¹⁰ It is that which makes us want to be more than we are or can be and, consequently, causes us to fall short of that truly great destiny for which we were created." Pride says I want to do it myself, so I can get the glory. Pride says I don't want to be under anybody in any way, not even God. Pride motivates people to use others, even to *try* to use God. I believe we can say that *pride* and *unbelief* (lack of faith in God) are the two primary roots of sin and rebellion against God. Pride and unbelief are not two totally separate sins; there is much overlap between these two great sins.] **(7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked** [They gained knowledge all right, but none of it was good. As fallen beings, who no longer enjoyed a right, life-flowing relationship with God, they knew (for one thing) that they were naked and something was wrong. And, as we learn in the next verse, they now knew that in their new state (with its "increased knowledge") they were *guilty* before God (which is painful knowledge to have). And they knew that something had changed down inside of them; for one thing, they now knew shame. The contrast with Gen. 2:25 should be noted: That verse informed us that before the fall Adam and Eve "were both naked and were not ashamed." Now that they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they felt a need to cover their (physical) nakedness, because they were ashamed, and after covering themselves, they still knew shame. Verse 10 shows that knowledge of their nakedness very much involved their relationship with God, not just their relationship with one another.

I'll quote part of what Boice says under Gen. 3:7.¹¹¹ "Up to this moment Adam and Eve did not know good *and* evil. They knew the good but *not* the evil. (God knows both of course. He knows good because it is an expression of his own nature. He knows evil because it is all that is opposed to his nature.) By sinning our first parents came to know evil as well as good...but they came to know it, not from the standpoint of God, who loves good and hates the evil, but as fallen creatures, who love evil and hate the good. Satan would have been perfectly truthful if he had said, 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be *like me*, knowing good and evil.' "

I'll quote a sentence from what Merrill F. Unger says under this verse.¹¹² "They now knew evil experientially, with all its attendant guilt, sorrow, shame, and misery."]; **and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (8) They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool** ["Literally, wind, breeze."] **of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.** [There is widespread agreement that God had been fellowshiping with Adam and Eve in the garden on a regular basis.] **(9) Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"** [God

¹¹⁰ *Mere Christianity*, page 94.

¹¹¹ *Genesis*, pages 178, 179.

¹¹² *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Moody Bible Institute, 1981), page 16.

knew, of course, where Adam was and what he had done.] **(10) He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” (11) And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (12) The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”**

[Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.” Adam’s “excuse” didn’t fly (as they say), but it did demonstrate the sinful tendency of fallen man to try to pass the blame to someone else. Guilt and shame are painful! Thanks be to God for His marvelous plan of salvation that enables believers to get rid of guilt and shame! We should be thankful that God has given us a conscience to inform us when things are wrong so we can get rid of our sin (repentance, forgiveness, new birth, righteousness, and holiness in and through Christ Jesus). On the other hand, we must reject the devil’s condemning accusations against us when they are not true. If we are in sin, we must make repentance top priority—there is no substitute.] **(13) Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (14) The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life** [What God goes on to say to the serpent in 3:15 makes it clear that He is speaking to Satan, not to a literal serpent. I have to assume, therefore, that the words of verse 14 speak, in a figurative way, of Satan’s judgment. (cf. Isa. 65:25; see footnote 101). Even if Satan had spoken through a literal serpent, there would have been no basis to curse all serpents for what Satan had done. You could even question whether the particular serpent that had been used by Satan would have been cursed. From my point of view, we can abandon the idea of some that initially (before the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve) literal serpents did not move along the ground on their “belly.”¹¹³

There is another issue we must consider here. Was God informing us here (in an indirect way) that the entire animal kingdom was now cursed, though cursed to a lesser extent than the serpent(s)? As a matter of fact, the Bible does indicate that the rebellion and fall of man drastically affected everything on the earth, including the animal kingdom. Before the fall, according to Genesis chapter 1 (especially Gen. 1:30), the animals were subordinate to man and were no danger to him, and they didn’t kill one another. Everything created in Genesis chapters 1, 2 was good.

Things changed drastically after the fall of man. This concept is strongly confirmed by the prophecies which show that when the Lord Jesus Christ has established His millennial kingdom on the earth the animals will no longer be a danger to man or to one another (see Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25; cf. Rom. 8:19-22).

It would be possible then to argue (and some commentators do) that the idea is included here in Gen. 3:14 that the animal kingdom was cursed because of the fall of man. There wouldn’t be any idea that the animal kingdom (non-moral beings) was

¹¹³ I’ll quote a sentence from what Kenneth A. Matthews says here (*Genesis 1-11:26* [Broadman, 1996, 1997, 2001], page 244). “While some Jewish interpreters surmised that the serpent must have originally been four-legged, there is no compelling reason for this conclusion. [He has a footnote. “E.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.*, Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.1.50; *Gen. Rab.* 19.1 and 20.5. It is thought to be reflective of an ancient view that the snake was at first upright and legged; see e.g., Skinner, *Genesis*, 78-79 and Sarna, *Genesis*, 27.”.]”

being cursed for any sin on their part. Genesis 3:17-19 show that everything involved with the production of food would now be cursed. That curse came because of man (see Gen. 3:17) and against man. In the same way, the curse that came on the animal kingdom came as a result of man's sin and against man (consider, for example, the danger that many animals pose to man and the fact that when domesticated animals have problems it hurts man).

The animal kingdom certainly was adversely affected along with "the creation" (cf. Rom. 8:19-22) by the fall of man. I doubt, however, that God intended here in Gen. 3:14 to inform us that the animal kingdom was cursed.¹¹⁴ (This lengthy footnote also

¹¹⁴ I'll quote part of what John H. Sailhamer says in a note regarding the translation and interpretation of Gen. 3:1 and 3:14 (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2 [Zondervan, 1990], pages 50, 51). "The...*min* preposition can have the sense of either partitive ('subtil as none other of the beasts,' GKC [Gesenius, Kautzsch, Cowley's *Hebrew Grammar*], par. 119w) or the comparative...as the NIV's 'more crafty than.' In favor of the partitive sense is the use of *min* in verse 14: 'Cursed are you from [*min*] all the cattle and from [*min*] all the beasts of the field' (pers. transl.). In verse 14 it is the serpent who is cursed and not the other animals.... The close ties between verse 14 and verse 1 suggest that the partitive sense of the *min* should be read there also.

The net effect of reading *min* as a partitive is to suggest that the serpent was not in every respect an ordinary animal. He was not 'craftier than' the other beasts of the field. Rather, he was crafty 'and the other animals were not.' ... There is certainly no mention yet of the identification of the serpent with Satan, but the narrative has not closed the door on that interpretation as some commentators have supposed." Sailhamer holds the view that there was a literal serpent that Satan spoke through. I believe that is the view of all the commentators that I quote in this footnote.

I'll quote part of what Edward J. Young says here (*Genesis 3* [Banner of Truth Trust, 1966], page 97). "God curses the serpent 'away from' [*min*] the cattle and beasts of the earth. The thought is not that of comparison, as though God had said that all the beasts would be cursed, but that the serpent would be cursed more than any. Rather, in the curse the serpent is separated from the other beasts. Whereas they are free, he is now in a peculiar bondage. ...

It is true that the whole creation is under bondage and groaneth and travaileth together, as the apostle says in Romans 8; but this is not the curse mentioned here. ... In this curse the serpent stands alone and unique.... ..."

I'll quote part of what H. C. Leupold says here (*Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. 1 [Wartburg Press, 1942], page 161). "The use of the preposition *min* bears close watching. Although it may be used to express a comparative, and so grammatically one might arrive at the meaning 'cursed *above* all animals' [KJV], yet nothing indicates that all animals are cursed. ... Consequently, the *min* partitive in the sense of 'out of the number of' (G. K. 119w; K. S. 278b) is under consideration. This particular or exclusive meaning of *min* is established by cases such as Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; 33:24. Therefore, this beast is singled out for a curse over against 'all the animals'...in general as well as over against 'the wild beasts'...in particular."

I'll quote part of what George Herbert Livingston says here (*Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 [Beacon Hill Press, 1969], page 46). "Above all [Livingston is using the KJV translation of Gen. 3:14, "thou art cursed above [*min*] all cattle, and above [*min*] every beast of the field"] is not in the sense 'more than,' thus suggesting that other animals were cursed too, but in the sense 'apart from' or 'separated out from among.' "

I'll quote part of what C. F. Keil says here (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 [Eerdmans, 1976 reprint], page 38). "*min*, literally *out of* the beasts, separate from them (Deut. 14:2; Jud. 5:24), is not a comparative signifying *more than*...; for the curse...was not pronounced upon all the beasts, but only upon the serpent alone."

I'll quote part of what F. Delitzsch says here (*Genesis*, Vol. 1 [Klock & Klock, 1978 reprint], page 160). "The *min*...[used twice] is not comparative (more cursed than...) but selective, like *e.g.* Jud. 5:24."

I'll make a few concluding remarks before leaving this rather important topic. I don't believe it is fully adequate to understand *min* in a *partitive* sense here, though I believe that's quite close to the right idea. Technically the *partitive* sense applies when the person/thing is viewed as being part of the whole. That could apply in Gen. 3:1 *if* the serpent is being considered part of the wild beasts of the field that God had

deals with the translation and interpretation of Gen. 3:1.) What God says here in Gen. 3:14, 15, it seems to me, doesn't go beyond dealing with the curse coming to Satan/the serpent (and his kingdom). Satan, a fallen being, was already under God's condemnation before he came on the scene in Genesis chapter 3.; **(15) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head** [In the margin the NASB has "Or *crush*" instead of "bruise"; the NIV translates "he will crush your head."], **and you shall bruise him on the heel** [The NIV has, "you will strike his heel." The Hebrew verb used earlier in this verse was also used here; the NASB translates "bruise" in both places. The translation "bruise" seems too mild for the destruction of Satan and his kingdom.]" [There is widespread agreement that this verse constitutes the first preaching of the gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ found in the Bible. We eventually learn (as God's progressive revelation continues in the Bible) that the "seed" of the woman heads up in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ,¹¹⁵ the One who mortally wounds Satan—He crushes his head. When His work of judging is done (after the great-white-throne judgment at the end of the millennium), He will have overthrown and totally removed Satan and all who follow him from God's kingdom forever. We eventually learn that the "seed" of the woman doesn't include all mankind, as you might have expected based on Gen. 3:15. The seed that will overthrow Satan is limited to that part of mankind that become aligned with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Seed, through faith in God. I'll say more about this seed as we continue.

However we translate the verb at the end of verse 15, it is clear that Satan (and his seed) attacks the people of God, very much including the Lord Jesus Christ. We now know that Satan even "succeeded" in having the Lord Jesus Christ put to death, but he was making a big mistake (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8). The atoning death of the Lamb of God was the primary thing that caused the downfall of Satan and his kingdom of darkness (cf., e.g., John 12:31-33; 16:11; and Heb. 2:14). It was also the primary thing that opened the door of salvation for all who will have a place in God's eternal kingdom.

Although it is clear that the Lord Jesus Christ (who was a man born of woman, of a virgin, a descendant of Eve, but who was/is much more than just a man; He never ceased being the eternal Son of God, deity with God the Father) was/is the primary one engaged in warfare with Satan, all the people of God of all ages have been engaged in

made, that is, *if* you are willing to assume that the serpent was a literal serpent (but I rather strongly resist that assumption). And the *partitive* sense of *min* could apply to the second use of *min* in 3:14 *if* you assume the serpent was a literal serpent and part of the beasts of the field (again, I rather strongly resist that assumption). However, when it comes to the first use of *min* in 3:14, which speaks of the serpent in relation to the cattle, a *partitive* use of *min* could hardly apply since the serpent was not part of the cattle. (The Hebrew noun [*behemah*] translated "cattle" here probably includes more than literal "cattle"; the NIV translates "livestock"; but it seems clear enough that the serpent was *not* part of both the *behemah* and the wild beasts of the earth.) This fact helps steer the translation for *min* in 3:14 to something like "Cursed are you apart from [in the sense "unlike"] all cattle, And cursed are you apart from [in the sense "unlike"] all the beasts of the field." We could call this a *separative* use of *min*. This same use of *min* would also be understood in 3:1, where we would translate something like "the serpent was crafty apart from [in the sense of "unlike"] all the beasts of the field." This translation for 3:1 has the added benefit that it doesn't infer that the serpent (who I understand to be Satan) is part of the beasts of the field.

¹¹⁵ It's important to understand that God wasn't caught off guard by the rebellion and fall of Adam and Eve. First Peter 1:20, for example, shows that before the fall of man God had already planned to send His Son to die for us and to overthrow Satan and his followers.

this warfare. God's people have a part in the overthrow of Satan: Romans 16:20 says, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet," and the Bible shows that we will be involved in God's end-time judgments from the time of the rapture, at which time we will begin to reign with Christ (cf., e.g., Psalm 110:3; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21; 17:14; and 19:14).

Satan's "seed" (those who are united with him in his rebellion and warfare against God and the people of God) clearly includes the evil angels and demons, but in the fullest sense it also includes the descendants (seed) of Eve who follow him. The Bible speaks of Satan's being the *father* of evil men, and of evil men being his *sons/children* (cf., e.g., Matt. 13:38; Acts 13:10; John 8:38, 41, 44; and 1 John 3:8, 10). It's clear, therefore (even if it wasn't clear to Adam and Eve back then), that some of the descendants of Eve are not engaged in warfare against Satan; many have rejected God and aligned themselves with the devil. We don't have to read very far in Genesis to confirm this fact. In Genesis chapter 4 we learn that Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, sided in with Satan and slew his brother Abel. 1 John 3:12 informs us that Cain was "of the evil one" (cf. 1 John 3:8-10; I'll quote 3:10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother").

Revelation chapter 12 is an important cross-reference; the *woman* of Revelation chapter 12 and her *seed* corresponds with the "woman" of Gen. 3:15 and her "seed" (that part of mankind who are faithful to God and against the devil). I'll quote Rev. 12:1-6, 13, and 17 and make a few comments in brackets, but I'll be brief here.¹¹⁶ "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars [Genesis 37:9, 10 help confirm that the "woman" here is a symbol for true Israel. Her seed (descendants, offspring) that we read about as we continue embraces all the believers from the days of Adam and Eve to the time the millennial kingdom begins.]; (2) and she was with child [more literally, "she was having in the womb"] and she cried out [better, "she was crying out"; the woman has been "crying out" since the fall of Adam and Eve because of the attacks of Satan and his followers; the first such attack that is recorded in the Bible came against faithful Abel], being in labor and in pain to give birth. [This birth, which was spoken of quite a few times in prophecy (see *Mid-Week Rapture*), refers to the birth into the fullness of eternal life and glory that God's people will experience at the time of Christ's mid-week return.] (3) Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads *were* seven diadems. [Revelation 12:7-9 make it clear that the "dragon" is Satan. The "red" undoubtedly pictures the blood that he has shed, especially the innocent blood, starting with Abel. The "seven heads" represent the seven world-kings of the Bible and show that Satan (the god of this world) is behind all the world-kings. The "ten horns" represent the ten rulers of the revived Roman empire, who are spoken of in the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation. The fact that the seven heads are crowned in this symbolic word-picture shows that this verse is describing what takes place throughout this entire age, with each of the world-kings having their time to rule on the earth. (In Rev. 13:1, by contrast, it is the ten horns that

¹¹⁶ Revelation chapter 12 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in some detail in my book *The Mid-Week Rapture*.

are crowned, which shows that that word-picture just deals with the last days, the days in which the ten horns reign.)] (4) And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. [This is the only verse in the Bible that indicates how many of the angels (a third) followed the devil in his rebellion against God. When the devil is cast down to the earth at the time of Christ's return in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, his angels will be thrown down with him (see Rev. 12:7-9).] And the dragon stood [better, "was standing"] before the woman who was about to give birth [better, "who was going to give birth"], so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. [It's important to understand that Satan doesn't wait for the ultimate birth of the child to attack; he does everything he can do to try to stop this birth from taking place; he attacks every godly person in every way that he can (God limits what he is permitted to do) throughout the history of man, and especially those clearly singled out by God (like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and his offspring, especially the Lord Jesus Christ, then the apostles, and every born-again Christian).] (5) And she gave birth to a son, a male *child* [This is the birth of the male child prophesied in Isa. 66:7. Both verses prophesy of the all-important birth into the fullness of eternal life for all the members of true Israel (whether still living or having died) who have become believers before the time of that birth.], who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [Revelation 2:26, 27 demonstrate that believers will rule (with Christ) with a rod of iron from the time of their mid-week birth and rapture.]; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. [These words speak of the mid-week rapture of the saints. We will be "caught up" to the throne of God and begin to reign with Him at that time. Significantly, the Greek verb (*harpazō*) translated "was caught up" here is the same verb used for the catching up/rapture of the saints in 1 Thess. 4:17.] (6) Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that she would be nourished there for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. [The "woman" still represents true Israel, but, in this subsequent context, she is minus the believers who were glorified at the mid-week birth and rapture. (Satan can't attack those believers any more.) The woman pictured in Rev. 12:6 is limited to those who will become believers after the mid-week rapture, centering in the conversion of the end-time remnant of literal Israel (the Jews). Revelation 12:13, which is quoted next, shows why the woman flees into the wilderness. Revelation 12:17, which is quoted after Rev. 12:13, confirms that (after the mid-week birth into the fullness of eternal life of Rev. 12:5) the woman has more "seed" waiting to be born again through faith in Christ and then to be born into the fullness of eternal life. The "seed" (of Rev. 12:17) are Christians; they "keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17).] ... (13) And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. ... (17) So the dragon was enraged with the woman [The dragon will be enraged against the woman (which equals being enraged against "the rest of her seed") from the time he is cast down to the earth in the middle of Daniel's 70th week (on his being casting down with his angels, see Rev. 12:4, 7-10).], and he went off to make war with the rest of her children [literally, "seed"], who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

Psalm 8 with Heb. 2:5-18 is another important cross-reference that deals with God's plan to use *man* (that part of mankind that is saved through and united with the God-man Jesus Christ) to overthrow Satan and his seed. See the verse-by-verse discussion of

Psalm 8 in my next paper (dated September 2004). Hebrews 2:5-14 are discussed there too, and other important cross-references.] **(16) To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children** [These words apparently don’t include the idea that if Eve would have had children before the fall, she would have had pain in childbirth, but less pain. The Hebrew verb could be translated “make great [your pain in childbirth],” or the equivalent. In footnote 53, we discussed some of the things that God used under the old covenant as powerful, often-recurring reminders that things were not right with man on the earth—man had fallen from a right, life-flowing relationship with God, and that is a very big deal. (Things change substantially under the new covenant, but many such reminders are still around.)

For one thing, everything associated with sexual relations and the bearing of children was greatly affected by the fall. This isn’t surprising. Now, instead of children being born in the garden of Eden and having a right relationship with God and spiritual life, they are born outside the garden, they do not automatically have a right relationship with God, they are spiritually dead,¹¹⁷ and the physical death process is already working in them.

After the fall, instead of not having shame even though they were naked (Gen. 2:25), Adam and Eve knew that they were naked, and they knew shame. Although there was no sin associated with having sexual relations under the Mosaic Law (assuming, of course, that the relations were proper, by God’s definition), sexual relations rendered the persons unclean (cf. Lev. 15:16-18; Ex. 19:15). Such *ceremonial* uncleanness, though not sinful, rendered the persons unfit to worship at the tabernacle, or to touch any consecrated thing. The menstrual cycle, which undoubtedly was adversely affected by the fall, served as another reminder for the people of Israel. Apart from the discomfort, the woman was unclean for seven days each cycle, and whoever touched her, or the chair she sat on, etc. became unclean (cf. Lev. 15:19-24). And, even though it was clearly recognized that having children was a blessing from God, giving birth rendered the woman unclean for forty days if a male child was born (Lev. 12:1-4) and for eighty days if a female child was born (Lev. 12:5, 6). Furthermore, after the days of ceremonial uncleanness were over for the woman who had given birth, she was required to offer burnt offerings and sin offerings to make atonement (Lev. 12:6-8).; **yet [and] your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.**” [Before the fall, Adam was the authority figure in that he was created first and Eve was created to be a “helper” for him; the New Testament shows that it was Adam’s sin, not Eve’s, that caused the fall of mankind. Before the fall, however, that authority wasn’t abused and it didn’t involve any negative overtones. After the fall, the Old Testament (and the history of man in general) offers all too many examples where men have sinfully abused their authority. Christianity did a lot to eliminate such abuses, but Christian men haven’t always walked as Christians are required to walk (which includes loving their wives as Christ loves the church, for one thing).] **(17) Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife** [See Gen. 3:6. Gordon Wenham comments that the words ‘listen to the voice of’ is an idiom meaning ‘obey’; cf. 16:2; Ex. 18:24; 2

¹¹⁷ Although Adam and Eve (and their offspring) were spiritually dead after the fall, the death wasn’t complete or final. God didn’t totally withdraw His presence, His life, or His blessings from them. Spiritual death won’t be complete and final until the time of second death of Rev. 20:14, 15.

Kings 10:6 (BDB, 1034a).”¹¹⁸ It’s very clear that Adam listened to (obeyed) the wrong voice—God was his God; Eve (who passed on to Adam what she had “learned” from Satan) was his wife, his companion, and his helper.], **and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. (18) Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you [cf. Heb. 6:8]; and you will eat the plants of the field; (19) By the sweat of your face you will eat bread [Compare Gen. 5:29; Rom. 8:20-22. Before the fall and the curse that came on the ground and the growing of plants, etc. for food, the needs of man were met with very little labor and no hassle. After the fall, it became a full time job, with much opposition (including such things as bad ground; thorns, thistles, and weeds; animals, insects, etc. eating the crops; plagues and other diseases that attack crops; and too little water or, in some cases, too much water. These things were designed, for one thing, to remind man of his changed (fallen) status before God to help humble him, and to help motivate him to constantly look to God for His salvation (salvation in the spiritual/heavenly and earthly dimensions).], **till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken [see Gen. 2:7]; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**” [Compare Psalm 90:3; 104:29; and Eccl. 12:7. God had warned Adam and Eve that they would die if they rebelled against Him and His word and ate of the forbidden fruit. The very day they rebelled they died spiritually and the physical death process was initiated.] **(20) Now the man called his wife’s name Eve** [The Hebrew noun *chawwah*, which was translated “Eve,” was only used twice in the Old Testament, here and Gen. 4:1. This Hebrew noun means “living,” or “life.” The name “Eve” is found twice in the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13).], **because she was** [The NIV translates, “because she would become.”] **the mother of all the living.** [“Living” is a translation of the Hebrew adjective *chay*, which means *alive, living*. Eve was the mother of all the people that would ever live on the earth—they would all descend from her. In the light of Gen. 3:15, we can apparently also think of Eve in a more restricted sense as the mother of all believers. Christians participate in the life of God, having been born again through the outpoured Spirit. And although the new birth wasn’t available yet to believers in the days of the Old Testament, they knew something of the life of God through His grace and Spirit. Ultimately all believers of all ages will be caught up into the fullness of the glory of the eternal life of God.**

God gave Adam and Eve much basis for hope. We discussed the significance of the promise contained in Gen. 3:15, which included the ultimate total defeat of the serpent and his seed. Even though 3:16-24 spoke of quite a bit of suffering for Adam and Eve (much such suffering is redemptive if it helps humble people before God and causes them to repent and to look to Him for everything they need, especially salvation), nevertheless, in spite of the fall and the death penalty, they would become parents, and God would provide food, etc. to sustain them. Also, as the next verse shows, He even made garments for them. God, in His mercy, did not totally abandon man to sin and death.

Will Adam and Eve have a place in God’s eternal kingdom? Before doing this study, I didn’t have much assurance that they would have a place in heaven, though I thought it was quite possible that they would. After spending some time with these verses, I have

¹¹⁸ *Genesis 1-15*, page 82.

much more assurance regarding their future. Based on the things God said to them here in chapter 3, I have to assume that they will have a place in heaven if they didn't rebel against God in a major way later, and the Bible doesn't mention further rebellion on their part. Assuming that they will have a place in God's eternal kingdom, their entrance into that kingdom will assuredly be through the atoning death of the Lamb of God. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will be permitted to enter (cf., e.g., Rev. 20:12, 15; 21:27). There will not be any people in heaven who earned the right to enter through their own righteousness—salvation is by grace (but, significantly, the grace of God in Christ sanctifies.)] **(21) The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.** [This kind gesture on God's part confirms that He did not totally sever all relations with Adam and Eve, even though they did lose the life-flowing relationship they had enjoyed with Him in the garden. The "garments of skin" undoubtedly came from animals that were killed.] **(22) Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—** **(23) therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. (24) So He drove the man out; and at the east** [In the margin the NIV has, "or, placed in front." The cherubim were apparently stationed at the entrance of the garden, which would have been on the east side of the garden. The tabernacle of Moses' day was entered from the east, as was the subsequent temple in Jerusalem.] **of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.** [I don't believe that God intended the words of 3:22 ("Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil"), which He spoke to the cherubim and other heavenly beings in His presence,¹¹⁹ to reflect reality/truth. I believe, in agreement with many,¹²⁰ that these words were sarcastic (irony). The devil had told Eve that she (and

¹¹⁹ We discussed God's heavenly council under Gen. 1:26. To be *like God* includes being *like the sons of God* (the cherubim, seraphim, archangel(s), angels, etc.).

¹²⁰ I'll list several other examples from the Old Testament where God used mocking sarcasm: 1 Kings 18:27; 22:15-23; Isa. 1:10; 28:1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 18; Jer. 2:27, 28; Ezek. 13:1-16; and Joel 3:10, but I'm not suggesting that any of these examples is fully comparable with the sarcasm (irony) of Gen. 3:22.

I'll quote a few sentences from what G. Charles Aalders says under Gen. 3:22 (*Genesis*, Vol. 1 [Zondervan, 1981], page 112). "The statement, 'the man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil,' needs some careful consideration. Was the serpent right after all? Among some ancient scholars the statement was considered to be irony. A few more recent interpreters have also taken this position. ... it is difficult to conceive of God expressing agreement with the words of the serpent which were used to lead the woman into sin." Aalders doesn't fully accept the viewpoint that the statement was irony.

I'll include two excerpts from the section on Gen. 3:22-24 from the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol. 1, *Genesis 1-11* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), pages 100, 101. The first excerpt is from Ephrem the Syrian, who was born AD 306. The editors put this excerpt under the heading "God Lampoons Adam." "God said, 'Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.' ... the point is... that God was mocking Adam in that Adam had previously been told [by Satan], 'You will become like God, knowing good and evil.' ... before they ate the fruit they had perceived in reality only good, and they heard about evil only by hearsay. After they ate, however, a change occurred so that now they would only hear about good by hearsay, whereas in reality they would taste only evil. For the glory with which they had been clothed passed away from them, while pain and disease that had been kept away from them now came to hold sway over them" (*Commentary on Genesis 2:34.1.2*; "Fathers of the Church" series, 91:122).

The second excerpt is from Chrysostom, who died AD 407. The editors put this excerpt under the heading, "The Devil Lies in Promising that the Tree Gives Knowledge [It did give knowledge of evil]."

Adam¹²¹) would become “like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). What a perverse lie! What he said was a million miles from the truth, and (as we discussed in some detail) Eve had no excuse to believe the devil, especially when it required her to agree that God was a liar, a withholder, etc. For Eve (and Adam) to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would *not* make them like God. Instead of becoming more like God, they became more like the devil. Adam and Eve had been created in the image of God, and they were already like Him in many ways before the fall. Eating of the forbidden fruit brought only the knowledge of evil.¹²² They now knew sin/evil by having sinned, and by having come to know experientially at least some of the penalty for sin.¹²³ After the fall the Bible still speaks of man as being made in the image of God (e.g., Gen. 9:6; James 3:9), but it’s clear that that image has been defaced.

“... In fact the devil said, ‘On the day when you eat of the fruit of the tree, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods [better, “God”], knowing good and evil.’ How can you maintain, you ask me, that it did not provide him with the knowledge of good and evil? Who said, in fact, that it provided him with this knowledge? The devil, you will answer. So do you put forward the testimony of the enemy and the conspirator? ... For the devil is a liar....” (*Homilies on Genesis* 7; PG 54:610).

I’ll quote part of what Chrysostom says regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from a different book (*Homilies on Genesis 1-17*; Homily 17, paragraphs 18, 19 [Catholic University of America Press, 1986], page 220). “...called it the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...because after eating it they were divested of the glory from above and also had experience of their obvious nakedness. ... Consider...how much shame they were eventually seized with after eating it and thus breaking the Lord’s command: ‘They stitched fig leaves together, and made themselves skirts.’ See the depths of indignity into which they fell from a condition of such great glory. Those who previously passed their life like angels on earth contrive covering for themselves out of fig leaves. Such is the evil that sin is: not only does it deprive us of grace from above, but it also casts us into deep shame and abjection, strips us of goods already belonging to us, and deprives us of all confidence.”

I’ll quote a paragraph from what John Calvin says under Gen. 3:22 (*Genesis* [Crossway Books, 2001], page 51). Under the words, “And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us,’” Calvin said, “This was an ironical reproof by which God not only pricked the heart of man but pierced it through and through. He [God] did not, however, cruelly triumph over the miserable and afflicted but, according to the necessity of the disease, applied a more drastic remedy. For though Adam was confounded and astonished at his calamity, yet he did not so deeply reflect on its cause as to become weary of his pride, that he might learn to embrace true humility. We may add that God inveighed by this irony not more against Adam himself than against his posterity, for the purpose of commending poverty of spirit to all ages.”

And, lastly, I’ll quote part of what B. Vawter says under Gen. 3:22 (*New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* [Thomas Nelson, 1981 reprint], page 180). “This is usually translated ‘Man has become like one of us,’ i.e., like one of the heavenly court or, simply (cf. 1:26), like God. In this case, the statement is taken as one of irony, echoing the lying promise of the tempter. The chief difficulty for this interpretation (which is at least as old as Ambrose) is that the text gives no indication that any part of it is to be read ironically.” This interpretation (seeing sarcasm, irony) doesn’t come from any special indication in 3:22, but from all that Genesis chapters 2 and 3 have to say about the tree of the knowledge of evil and the temptation and fall of man.

¹²¹ The verb “you will be like God, knowing good and evil” in Gen. 3:5 is plural in the Hebrew.

¹²² I’ll quote a sentence from what Merrill F. Unger says under Gen. 3:22 (*Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 [Moody Press, 1981], page 20), “But man, created with only the knowledge of good, acquired the experiential knowledge of evil through pride and disobedience, and in this manner fell into a state of sin and misery.”

¹²³ Neither God nor His heavenly court (I’m speaking of the cherubim, angels, etc. who remained faithful to God) had sinned or come to experience the penalty/consequences of sinning.

There was no magic fruit from a literal tree of life that would enable Adam and Eve to cancel the fact that they had lost their life-flowing relationship with God and that the physical death process had now begun to work in them. The tree of life was a symbol for participation in the life and blessings of God that were available to Adam and Eve before they (in rebellion against God) ate of the tree of death (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), which only brought death, spiritual death and physical death, it brought only the knowledge of evil. As born-again Christians, we participate in the life of God, but only in a preliminary, partial sense; after we are glorified, however, we will participate in the life of God in a much fuller sense than what Adam and Eve had before the fall (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:45-57). What a salvation plan! What a Savior! What a salvation!

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden, they were, for one thing, being driven from the presence of God, who is the only source of life, and the way into His presence was closed and guarded. To say the same thing using symbolic language, the “way to the tree of life” was closed and guarded. One of the primary functions of the “cherubim” (“cherubim” is the Hebrew plural of the singular noun “cherub”) was/is to guard the way to the presence of God (not that God needs to be protected). I suppose that’s the primary reason the cherubim/living creatures have a large number of eyes—you don’t sneak up on them (cf. Ezek. 1:18; 10:12; and Rev. 4:6).

The time came, and it could have been right after Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden, that the garden ceased to exist in the physical dimension on the earth. It certainly has not existed for a long time in the physical dimension. However, God still exists, as do the cherubim, and wherever He is (we can say heaven), the cherubim guard the way into His presence. Christians are enabled to dwell in the presence of God in a very real way, and His life is in us by His Spirit who was poured out starting on the day of Pentecost, because of the incarnation, atoning death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, but most of the glory is reserved for the (near) future.]

Excerpts from Henri Blocher; the First Excerpt Deals Mostly with the Fact that
the Serpent of Genesis Chapter 3 Was Satan.¹²⁴

I quoted some five paragraphs from Blocher in the original paper, dealing with the fact that the serpent was Satan (from his pages 150-152; 179, 180). Here I’ll just mention that he makes the point that Gen. 3:15 pictures Satan’s defeat “after many generations of the human race” and that the book of Revelation shows clearly that the serpent of Genesis chapter 3 was Satan.

The following excerpt from Blocher and my comments and quotations from others that are included in brackets deal, for the most part, with the most probable specific forbidden fruit (bait) the devil used to entice Eve and Adam.

“...the snake of the Garden of Eden stands for the attraction of pagan religion and its magic spells. It was the emblem of fertility rites and of cults involving prostitution. It was the animal of divination. ... There is nothing arbitrary about seeing in the snake, in Genesis, the representation of the lying spirit which empowers paganism. This we believe to have been the

¹²⁴ *In the Beginning*, translated by David G. Preston (Inter-Varsity Press, 1984).

thought of the writer. [I'm more interested in the thought of the One behind the writer of Genesis and the One behind the writer of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation came mostly by direct revelation (there was little room for input by the apostle John); I assume that the first three chapters of Genesis came mostly (if not entirely) by direct revelation also.¹²⁵ As his next paragraph shows (which I am not quoting), Blocher isn't denying the existence of the literal devil here in Genesis chapter 3.

The primary reason I wanted to quote the paragraph I just quoted from Blocher was to make the point that I believe the most likely forbidden fruit (bait) that Satan used to tempt Eve and Adam was the desire for mysterious, exciting, occult powers and the attendant baggage that comes along with satanic inspired "religion." It may look good for a while, but no true/real/ultimate good ever comes from Satanic, demonic powers.

I'll quote what Merrill Unger says under Gen. 3:5.¹²⁶ "What could be wrong in acquiring knowledge? Nothing, if it were acquired in the will of God and according to His word. But the knowledge the tempter offered Eve was contrary to both. Eve was tricked into a false or occult knowledge of the evil world of supernaturalism that would bring with it sorrow and misery (1 Tim. 2:14)."

I'll quote a few sentences from what Allen P. Ross says under Gen. 3:7.¹²⁷ "They knew more [after they ate the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil], but that additional knowledge was evil. ... The message to Israel, and to all God's people, should now be clear: *A thorough knowledge of the Word of God and an unwavering trust in the goodness of God are absolutely essential for spiritual victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.* The appeal by the Tempter to humankind's desire to know, under the guise of spiritual development, is thereby set aside. In practical terms, this lesson would mean for Israel that the subtle claims of the pagans to achieve divinity and superior knowledge through their corrupt [from the devil; demonic] practices were false. The people of God were to avoid the satanic appeal to an elevated life and superior knowledge [the devil promises these things] if that appeal also required transgressing God's barriers [and God's people are clearly forbidden to fellowship with the devil or to look to him (or anyone but God) for "help"]."

And I'll quote two paragraphs from what Victor P. Hamilton says under Gen. 3:5.¹²⁸ "Should she decide to proceed and implement the serpent's suggestion she will begin her heavenward climb. Von Rad is quite correct when he says that 'the serpent's insinuation is the possibility of an extension of human existence beyond the limits set for it by God at creation, an increase of life not only in the sense of pure intellectual enrichment but also familiarity with and power over, mysteries that lie beyond man.'¹²⁹

Deification is a fantasy difficult to repress and a temptation hard to reject. In the woman's case she need give in to both only [This is a very big "only."] by shifting her commitment from doing God's will to doing her own will. Whenever one makes his own will crucial and God's

¹²⁵ Blocher doesn't deny God's immediate revelation in Genesis chapters 1-3, but I'm not satisfied with what he says on page 159, "If we recognize that the first event of history is reached by means of mental reconstruction, [He has a footnote here, "Dubarle, p. 190n., quotes Renckens, K. Rahner and L. Alonso-Schokel as sharing this opinion. We admit that it is probable, without excluding a more immediate form of revelation."] intuitive and imaginative at first and then taken up by the theologian, we by no means admit thereby that its historicity is unimportant for the writer. It is precisely because the historical cause is so important to him that he reconstructs what occurred."

¹²⁶ *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Moody Bible Institute, 1981), page 16.

¹²⁷ *Creation and Blessing* (Baker, 1996, 1998), page 137.

¹²⁸ *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Eerdmans, 1990), page 190.

¹²⁹ "Genesis (Westminster Press, 1972), page 89."

revealed will irrelevant, whenever autonomy displaces submission and obedience in a person, that finite individual attempts to rise above the limitations imposed on him by his creator.”

Now I'll finish the excerpt from Blocher.]

... In the light of later revelation, what name are we to give to that spirit which constantly opposed the LORD and sought to turn Israel [and not just Israel] away from him, unless it is the devil and Satan? ...” (pages 153, 154).

Now I'll quote a relatively small part of what Blocher says under the heading “The historicity of the material” (pages 154-170). I'll skip this section in the internet version of this paper. One major point that Blocher made here is that our goal must be to interpret Genesis chapters 1-3 the way God intended. For one thing, we aren't supposed to alter God's intended interpretation to build a better defense against heretics. Blocher insists (and rightly so) that Adam and Eve were real persons and that their fall was a historical event and that without this truth the message of the gospel would be jeopardized.