THE MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF THE CREATION NARRATIVE, GENESIS 1-2

By Duane Warden

OBSERVATION:
- THERE ARE FEW THINGS MORE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH THAN THE CONVICTION THAT MATERIAL EXISTENCE HAS A BEGINNING AND AN END.

BECAUSE THERE IS A BEGINNING AND AN END, THE UNIVERSE IS HERE FOR A REASON.
- IT IS GOING SOMEWHERE.
- IF IT IS GOING SOMEWHERE, IT HAS MEANING.
- THUS IT IS REASONABLE TO BELIEVE THAT HUMAN LIFE HAS MEANING.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH WHEN ONE ASKS ABOUT THE MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF GENESIS 1-2

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
- FOR CENTURIES READERS OF THE BIBLE WERE LITTLE CONCERNED WITH THE TIME LINE IN GENESIS 1-2.
- WHEN CREATION TOOK PLACE PRESENTED NO BURNING QUESTION.
- THE ORDER OF CREATION EVENTS AND THE LENGTH OF THE DAYS OCCA-SIONED A FEW REMARKS AMONG SCHOLARS, BUT GENERALLY IT WAS ENOUGH TO SAY, “GOD CREATED.”

THE 17TH & 18TH CENTURY ENLIGHTMENT AND THE ADVENT OF MODERN SCIENCE CAUSED NEW QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO GENESIS 1-2.
- OBSERVATION AND REASONING MADE IT DIFFICULT TO OVERLAY A SCIENTIFIC TIME LINE ON A LITERAL READING OF GENESIS.
- QUESTIONS WEREN'T NECESSARILY DRIVEN BY ATHEISTS.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE OF TENSIONS
- SCIENTIFIC DATA OFFERED NO COMPETING EXPLANATION OF HOW THE UNIVERSE BEGAN.

NEVER BEFORE HAD PEOPLE OF FAITH BEEN CONCERNED WITH HARMONIZING GENESIS 1-2 WITH ANYTHING
- CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS TOOK ON NEW MEANING.

IT BECAME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT THE MEANING OF THE WORD “DAYS” IN GENESIS 1 WAS CENTRAL TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MESSAGE.
DRIVEN BY SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS, CHRISTIANS HAVE READ THE DAYS OF GENESIS IN THREE BASIC WAYS.
• A MORE OR LESS LITERAL APPROACH, I.E., THE DAYS ARE 24 HOUR PERIODS.
• A FIGURATIVE APPROACH. THE DAYS ARE VAST EONS OF TIME.
• A LITERARY APPROACH. TIME HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT THE DAYS MEAN.

LITERAL 24 HOUR DAYS
• IF SCIENTIFIC DATA REQUIRES MORE TIME OR A DIFFERENT ORDER OF EVENTS, ITS WRONG.
• THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE EARTH IS 6,000 TO 10,000 YEARS OLD.
• GEOLOGICAL FEATURES THAT MAKE IT LOOK OLDER ARE THE RESULT OF THE FLOOD.

OFTEN THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION FITS INTO A LARGER THEOLOGICAL SCHEME
• THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS (2ND CENT.) MAINTAINED THAT THE DAYS OF CREATION SYMBOLIZED 6 PERIODS OF 1000 YEARS EACH.
• BISHOP USHER (17TH CENT.) CALCULATED THE YEAR AND DAY OF CREATION BASED ON THE SCHEME.
• PREMILLENNIAL GROUPS FIND A UTOPIAN LIFE ON EARTH DURING THE SEVENTH DAY. (*LEFT BEHIND* SERIES)

STRENGTHS OF THE LITERAL DAY VIEW
• BY NO MEANS IS THE VIEW NECESSARILY TIED TO MILLENNIAL THEOLOGY.
• IT TAKES THE TEXT OF THE BIBLE AT FACE VALUE.
• IT IS NOT DRIVEN BY A DESIRE TO HARMONIZE SCRIPTURE TO SCIENTIFIC DATA.

WEAKNESSES OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF DAYS
• IT FAILS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ANCIENT HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SETTING IN WHICH THE ACCOUNT ORIGINATED.
• IT IGNORES OR TREATS BLITHELY DIFFICULT QUESTIONS.
• IT TENDS TO SEE ITSELF AS THE ONLY FAITHFUL WAY OF INTERPRETING GENESIS.

STRENGTHS
• APPEALS TO PSALM 90:7 & 2 PETER 3:8, A DAY IS AS A 1000 YEARS WITH GOD.
• RECKONS WITH AT LEAST SOME SCIENTIFIC DATA.
• RECOGNIZES THAT FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IS USED IN THE BIBLE.

WEAKNESSES
• IT SEEMS TO BE DRIVEN BY SCIENCE, NOT THE BIBLE.
• IT FAILS TO CONSIDER THE ANCIENT HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SETTING.
• IT MUST TAKE CONSIDERABLE LIBERTIES WITH THE TEXT TO MAKE ANY SCHEME WORK.

FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION OF DAYS IN GENESIS 1
• THE DAYS ARE UNDERSTOOD TO REPRESENT LONG, INDETERMINATE PERIODS.
• ONE VARIATION MAINTAINS THAT GOD STEPS INTO THE WORLD INTERMITTENTLY AND CREATES.

STRENGTHS
• APPEALS TO PSALM 90:7 & 2 PETER 3:8, A DAY IS AS A 1000 YEARS WITH GOD.
• RECKONS WITH AT LEAST SOME SCIENTIFIC DATA.
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• IT SEEMS TO BE DRIVEN BY SCIENCE, NOT THE BIBLE.
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• IT MUST TAKE CONSIDERABLE LIBERTIES WITH THE TEXT TO MAKE ANY SCHEME WORK.

NEITHER THE LITERAL NOR THE FIGURATIVE VIEWPOINTS HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS ATTACHED TO THEM.
A BETTER WAY OF READING THE DAYS OF GENESIS 1 IS TO UNDERSTAND THEM IN LIGHT OF THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL TIMEFRAME IN WHICH THEY WERE WRITTEN.
Literary Movement in Genesis chs. 1-2

Days 1 - 3
CREATION: God creates light, the firmament, land, and vegetation.

Day 4
RULERS: Sun, Moon, and Stars rule over the creation of days 1-3. There is order to the coming and going of days, months & years.

Interestingly, Genesis 1 does not use the normal Hebrew words for “sun” and “moon.” Rather they are called “the greater light” and “the lesser light.” Could it be because many religious deified the sun and moon?

Days 5 - 6
CREATION: God creates animals for the land, sea, and air.

Day 6
RULERS: Order on the earth. Humankind rules over the creation of Days 5-6.

Day 7
- Elohim is Everlasting King, Ruler of Heaven and Earth.
- Blessing of Rest for the Sabbath.

PARALLELISM IN GENESIS 1

Forming the World Items Created
Day
1. Darkness, light
2. Heavens, water
3. Seas, land, vegetation

Filling the World Items Created
Day
- Heavenly light-bearers
- Birds of the air; water animals
- Land animals; man; provision for food
In Genesis 2:3 the story of creation appears to end. “…He rested from all his work which God had created.”

As Genesis 2:4 begins there is a name change. Up to this point the Creator has simply been called God, Elohim. After Genesis 2:4 he is Lord God, Yahweh Elohim.

Comparison of Creation Accounts in Genesis 1 & 2

**Genesis 1**
- Elohim is Creator
- Elohim creates heavens, firmament, sea and land, including vegetation, animals and man.
- Elohim makes man ruler over the created order.
- Focus is on Order: Man is Acme of Creation

**Genesis 2**
- Yahweh Elohim is Creator of humankind
- Yahweh Elohim serves man by making him a home in Eden.
- Yahweh Elohim makes man subject to his rule; he gives man a law.
- Focus is on relationship: God cares for the man he made.

**WHAT IS THE POINT?**

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF THERE IS A CAREFUL LITERARY STRUCTURE TO GENESIS 1 & 2?**

**INTERPRETATION IS THE POINT**

- A structured, poetical literary style suggests that we are no more to read the creation narrative as straightforward history than we are any other poetical literature.
- There are historical events behind the words but they are not expressed in the manner of one who only wants to record history.

**TO ILLUSTRATE**

- The word for man (humankind) in Hebrew is "adam (אָדָם)." The word for dirt or earth is "adamah (אָדָמָה)." Genesis 2:7 says that God formed the Adam from the Adamah.
- When God named the man it was no accident that he called him Adam, the one from the ground.
- The suggestion is that the historical reality of God’s creation is being expressed in metaphor.

**THE QUESTIONS**

When interpreting any verbal communication it is important to ask, “What questions are the words intended to address?”

What questions lie behind the creation narrative in Genesis 1 & 2?

**DO SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS DRIVE THE NARRATIVE?**

The question we bring to Genesis 1 & 2 is, “Is the world we experience a product of natural forces with no reference to God, or is all existence God’s creation?”

All we know about the people of the ancient world suggests they did not reflect on this question. The beginning place for the ancients was that some force beyond humankind ordered the material world.

**THE BREVITY OF THE ACCOUNT SUGGESTS A METAPHORICAL TELLING.**

- Genesis uses 54 verses to describe the creation of the universe, the earth, life and humankind.
- Scripture uses 457 verses to describe the building of the Tabernacle.
- It is safe to say that scientific questions did not drive the narrative in Genesis.
What Are The Questions That Genesis 1-2 Address?

- Who is the God or gods who brought the world into being?
- Why has the created order come into being?
- What is the relationship of men and women to the Divine?
- How ought life to be lived as a consequence of God’s creative work?

DO EFFORTS TO HARMONIZE THE CREATION NARRATIVE WITH SCIENCE PRODUCE FRUITFUL RESULTS?

- A great deal of effort has gone into attempts at harmonization, some by religious people, some by scientists.
- Often the assumption is that Genesis addresses scientific questions.
- A careful reading of Genesis suggests that modern scientific questions are far from the author’s mind.

THE QUESTION ANCIENT PEOPLE Asked

- It never occurred to ancient people to ask whether or not there were gods.
- For the ancients the question was this: “What kind of force, gods, demons, or God caused the experienced world to be?”
- In light of that question, it is helpful for the interpretation of Genesis 1-2 to compare other creation accounts roughly contemporaneous with Genesis to that in the Bible.

The Creation Account in Genesis 1-2 Competed with Other Versions of Creation

Ancient creation myths roughly contemporaneous with the Genesis account and from the same part of the world have been preserved on clay tablets in cuneiform script.

The Akkadian/Babylonian Creation Epic

- Often Called Enuma Elish “When on High” from its opening words.
- First uncovered by the British Excavations at the site of ancient Nineveh (1901).

A PORTION OF ENUMA ELISH, THE BABYLONIAN CREATION MYTH

- “When on high the heaven had not been named
  Firm ground below had not been called by name
Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter,
  (And) Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,
  Their Waters commingling as a single body;
  No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared.
  When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
  Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—
  Then it was that the gods were formed within them.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Before there were any gods, in the beginning there appears to be a kind of primordial ooze. It was out of this chaotic mass that the gods arose.
- Only after the gods appear can there be creation. There is no explanation of how they came to be.
- The epic goes on to describe conflicts and wars between the gods. In the end, Marduk is the victor.

THE EPIC CONTINUES

- “When Marduk hears the words of the gods, His heart prompts (him) to fashion artful works.
  Opening his mouth, he addressed Ea
  To impart the plan he had conceived in his heart:
  ‘Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
  I will establish a savage, “man” shall be his name.
  Very, savage-man I will create.
  He shall be charged with the service of the gods
  That they might be at ease!’”
"They bound him [the rebellious god], holding him before Ea. They imposed on him his guilt and severed his blood (vessels). Out of his blood they fashioned mankind. They imposed service [on mankind] and let free the gods.”

**ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Polytheistic**
- Conflict among the gods is expected.
- There is no morality; no absolutes, inherent to the gods.
- The gods are capricious, hence there is no moral authority in the universe.

**Biblical**
- God is one.
- God is the creator of order, of beginning and end of life.
- There is no correlation between right conduct and individual or national well-being.
- The answers of Genesis 1 & 2 are considerably different than that of polytheistic myth.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOD/MAN RELATIONSHIP**

**Polytheistic**
- The gods manipulate through magic and rituals.
- The gods are jealous, they test and their human followers.
- The gods have physical forms that encompass essential elements of their nature.

**Biblical**
- God is one, and there is no image made of him.
- God is a person on whom manipulative magic has no effect.
- God is a person on whom manipulative magic has no effect.
- God is the creator of all, he is the source of all creation.

**THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Polytheistic**
- The gods themselves are created beings.
- The gods are male and female; they are not existent in sexual procreation.
- The gods are everywhere.

**Biblical**
- God is one, and there is no image made of him.
- God is the creator of order, of beginning and end of life.
- There is no correlation between right conduct and individual or national well-being.
- People are cursed by man.
Scientific Questions Are of No Concern to the Author

- God creates light before the sun & stars. There is no interest in the light's source.
- God creates vegetation before there is a sun. There is no interest in the sun's role in photosynthesis.
- God separates the waters above the earth from those on the earth. There is no interest in precipitation and weather patterns.
- God creates creeping things (insects?) after the birds. There is no interest in the biological interdependence of each.
- A mist arises and waters the garden. There is no interest in the source of the moisture.

The Creation Narrative and History

- When we force scientific questions on Genesis 1-2 by insisting that it be a straightforward presentation of history, we can lose sight of the profound spiritual/theological messages of the text.
- That is not to divorce the text altogether from history. Creation took place in time, and God made all that is.

The Hebrew Word for Day Is <oy (yom). The Way It Is Used in Genesis 3 Must Be Determined From the Context.

The Days of Genesis 1

Must the Christian, if he believes the Bible, take the days of Genesis one as literal 24-hour periods?

Strength: That is what the reader normally expects the word day to mean. Until the advent of modern science, there was no reason to take them any other way.

Problem: The geological record suggests an old earth where life changes over long periods of time.

Question

Shouldn't we allow the Bible to speak for itself? Do we compromise the Bible when we bring scientific data to bear on interpretation? If the results of scientific research differ with the Bible's assertion, then the scientific research must be wrong. The Bible is absolutely true.

Response

God speaks to us in both his world and his Word. Either may be misunderstood.

Scientific research frequently revises its “assured results.” The Christian is my no means required to adjust his faith to accommodate the latest scientific viewpoints.

Assertions made by some scientists compromise biblical affirmations to an intolerable degree, just as do some assertions of philosophers. When that happens, we stand with the Bible.

However, it is no necessary cause for alarm when scientific data calls for reinterpretation of the Bible.

Godly people once believed the earth was at the center of the universe. They argued that on the basis of biblical data and theological considerations.

Psalm 104:5, “He established the earth upon its foundations,” and other like passages suggest a geocentric universe.

Theologically the reasoning has been that God would not put humankind, the apex of creation, anywhere but the center.

New data has called on believers to reconsider what the Bible means on scores of occasions.
What Does the Scientific Data Require?

Do the scientific data require the interpreter of the Bible to reject the days of Genesis one as literal 24-hour days?

Are the scientific data incompatible with the biblical assertion of creation in six 24-hour days?

Can one treat the scientific data fairly and continue to believe the Genesis account of creation?

Response

For those who are satisfied that the scientific data can be reconciled with 24-hour days in Genesis, there is no problem. Large numbers of people believe that the geological/fossil record cannot be reconciled with a young earth and creation in 6 literal 24-hour periods. For them it is a problem for faith.

Ought Scientific Research Determine the Meaning of the Creation Account in Genesis?

- The Short answer is No. However......
- The knowledge that men and women of science bring to the interpretation of the biblical text is as important as any other.
- It is as it should be when a better knowledge of the world contributes to a better understanding of the Bible.

“"We can learn from history that Christian faith is influenced both by our knowledge and our ignorance in other fields and that scientific development will influence faith.”

– Marcel Kant, Ursinus Univ., Utrecht, The Netherlands in Review of Biblical Literature, on the SBL web-site.

What Does Faith Require?

We return to the question: Does faith in God and faith in the truth of the Bible require the believer to accept the days of Genesis 1 & 2 as literal 24-hour periods?

Response

A better understanding of the world has made it difficult for many to accept the conclusions that people from a pre-scientific age reached when they interpreted the creation narrative in Genesis. Students of the Bible have been nudged by scientific research to reexamine the days of Genesis, but they have also been nudged from other directions. A more careful reading of Genesis reveals that the concerns of the author is something other than the time frame of creation.

The Wrong Way to Form the Question: Are We to Accept Science or the Bible?

- Some scientists (Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins) as well as some Christians (Tim LaHaye) frame the question this way.
- We accept knowledge from every quarter in our quest to understand both our world and the ways of God in our world.

The text of Genesis 1 is not compromised when readers understand the creation days to fit into an overall literary, poetical, metaphorical design.

One may take the Bible seriously, believe it to be absolutely true, and take the days of Genesis 1 as figurative expressions.
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ARE THERE OTHER PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE THAT REQUIRE THE READER TO INTERPRET THE DAYS OF GENESIS 1 LITERALLY?

- Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens...and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

SIMILARLY EXODUS 31:17: “...for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor.”

The Hebrew word <oy, like the English word “day” can be used figuratively. Context alone can determine when it is literal.

For example, in Exodus 20:11, “…The Lord blessed the sabbath day…” the word day refers to every seventh day.

The Bible offers many examples where words for time periods are used in a figurative sense:

- Eccl. 12:3, “…in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble.”
- 1 John 2:18, “Children, it is the last hour…”

What are the implications when we suggest the days of Genesis 1 are part of a figurative/poetical narrative?

- We imply that God has chosen to communicate using language that people from both a pre-scientific and a scientific age can appreciate.
- We imply that behind the figurative language there are literal, historical events.
- We imply that the truths expressed in Genesis 1-2 are significance for reasons that have nothing to do with the duration of a 24-hour day.

In 1 Samuel 2:8 Hannah prayed, “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s and on them he has set the world.”

Few who argue the “days” of Genesis 1 are literal 24 hour periods would argue for a literal interpretation of 1 Samuel 2:8.

Authors of the Bible regularly reflect the prevailing cultural understanding of the natural world. The Bible seeks to give its readers no lesson in science.

The Creation narrative in Genesis 1-2 is a reflection of the prevailing cultural understanding of the natural world.

Attempts to Rescue the 24-hour Days of Genesis

- There is a gap of indeterminate time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.
- There are never ending cycles of creation, chaos, and recreation.
- The earth was created full-grown so that it has the appearance of age.
Allowing the Text to Speak for Itself

- The days are woven into an artistic, literary presentation, demonstrating that the universe is God’s creation.
- In the literary structure the days are part of a figurative, non-chronological (even hymnic) presentation of God’s complete creation.
- I want to insist that the above interpretation is true to the biblical text.
- Experience teaches that when biblical interpretation marries the spirit of the age, it finds itself a widow in the following age.

AN ILLUSTRATION

In the parable of the Good Samaritan the donkey, the inn where the Samaritan left the wounded man, and the two coins he left with the innkeeper don’t particularly symbolize anything. They are part of a story that needs to be understood as a whole.

Likewise, the days in the Genesis narrative don’t particularly symbolize anything. They are part of the larger poetical depiction of God’s creative power.

Doesn’t the Phrase “Evening and Morning” Require That the Author Meant 24 Hour Days?

1. Among the figurative ways that people use language is a device called “merism.”
3. When we say, “I’ll be with you through thick and thin,” we are using this figure of speech.
4. Evening and morning in Genesis 1 may mean the whole of the creative period. It may be an example of merism.
5. In fact, if a 24 hour day is under consideration we might have expected the author to write, “From one evening to the next,” or the like.

TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE LITERALLY WHEN THE AUTHOR IS SPEAKING FIGURATIVELY IN METAPHORS IS LIKE TRYING TO PLAY CHESS ON A BASEBALL DIAMOND.

SUMMARY

- The author of Genesis addressed religious and ethical questions.
- He was unconcerned with the mechanics of creation.
- The order of the Creation and the time frame suit the author’s religious and ethical concerns, not our scientific concerns.

The Ethical & Religious Concerns of the Author Assume These Facts

- God is Creator.
- God gave mankind a stewardship over the created order.
- Man is morally and ethically like God, and hence answerable to God.

Conclusions

- It would be equally mistaken to assert that Genesis 1-2 has no points of contact with scientific questions or to assert that its principal concern is scientific questions.
- To this point all science has been able to say about origins is that there is no scientific explanation for existence.

Genesis 1-2 Isn’t All

After Genesis 1-2, the assumption of the Bible throughout its course is that the universe and mankind have been created by God. That God is Creator is no afterthought in the Bible.

Exodus 31:17

“It [the Sabbath] is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”
"Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways; And how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:14)

Psalm 104:5-6

"Thou didst set the earth on its foundation, So that it should never be shaken. Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment; The water stood above the mountains."

Isaiah 44:24

"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb; 'I am the Lord, who made all things, Who stretched out the heavens alone, Who spread out the earth— Who was with me?'"

Colossians 1:15-16

"He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."

AT SOME POINT IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO LOOK AT THE UNIVERSE AND ASK QUESTIONS. AT SOME POINT THE UNIVERSE BECOMES THE QUESTION.

"No utilitarian philosophy explains a snow crystal, no doctrine of use or disuse. Water has merely leapt out of vapor and thin nothingness in the night sky to array itself in form. There is no logical reason for the existence of a snowflake any more than there is for evolution. It is an apparition from that mysterious shadow world beyond nature, that final world which contains—if anything contains—the explanation of men and catfish and green leaves."


CONCLUSIONS

- There are places where the concerns of science and the concerns of the Bible interpreter overlap. But....
- The attempt to make the Bible serve science or to make science serve biblical interpretation is ill advised.

It is as it should be when:

1. Scientific data challenges old interpretations of the Bible.
2. Biblical revelation challenges the stance of the scientist who reduces existence to measurements and descriptions.
3. The scientist concedes that he has no explanation for being itself.
4. The Bible student respects the knowledge science brings to the table.

SOME POPULARIZERS OF SCIENCE AND SOME SCIENTISTS ACCUSE CHRISTIANS OF A “GOD OF THE GAPS” APPROACH TO SCIENCE. THROW GOD IN WHEN SCIENTISTS HAVE A GAP IN DATA.
SOME SCIENTISTS HAVE A SCIENCE OF THE GAPS APPROACH. THEY HAVE FAITH THAT RESEARCH WILL EXPLAIN, E.G., THE BIG BANG, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO GOD.

THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF GENESIS USE FOUR DIFFERENT HEBREW WORDS FOR GOD’S ACTIVITY. EACH OF THEM OFFERS CLUES ABOUT THE AUTHOR’S INTENDED MESSAGE.

ar*B*, BARAH
- The word is used in Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3, 4.
- It is a relatively rare word. It is used only about 50 times in the Bible.
- "It is used exclusively to denote divine creation." It contrasts "the incomparability of the creative work of God" with any other creative force.

hc*u*, JASAH
- The word is one of the most common of the Hebrew Bible. It is usually translated “to do,” or “to make.”
- It is used repeatedly in Genesis 1-2. In 1:7, 16, 25, 26, 31; 2:2 (twice), 3, 4, 18.
- Generally, Jasah refers to the making of something out of existing material.

rx^y`, YATZAR
- The word is usually translated “to form” or “to fashion” or “to shape.”
- It is sometimes used similar to barah. It is a more concrete word than barah. It isn't used of creation in the abstract.
- The word is used in Gen. 2:7, 8, 19, and seldom elsewhere.

hn*B*, BANAH
- The word is usually translated “to build.” It is a common one in the Old Testament.
- Banah is the word to use for building a city, or a house, or a wall.
- Banah is used only one time in the opening chapters of Genesis, in 2:22. He “built” a woman from the rib he had taken from man.

CONCLUSIONS FROM WORD STUDY
- There is little theological significance in the words Jasah and banah. The author used them as general words for God’s making or building the universe.
- The word barah is specifically chosen to convey the thought of God’s creating ex nihilo, from nothingness.
- The word yatzar, like barah, suggests divine activity. God formed man and the animals, things which only God could do.

SUMMARY
- The questions of modern science, for the most part, were of no concern to the authors of the Bible or their original audiences.
- The Bible presents God as the source of all life, as Creator.
- Some scientists offer a dogma that contradicts the Bible’s affirmation that God has created all that is from nothingness and thus brought time itself into being.
- Some Biblical students attempt to force a personal interpretation of the Bible onto the scientific data.
For Discussion: What Do You Think of the Following:

- "Science must be provisionally atheistic, or cease to be itself." Basil Wiley, in *Darwinism and the Study of Society* (Chicago, 1961).
- Does a theory that observes natural processes and postulates intelligent design have as much claim to the adjective “scientific” as a theory that postulates natural processes without reference to intelligent design?