



2020 2Q How to Interpret Scripture: Lesson 8 Creation: Genesis as Foundation—Part I

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

I like this title—Genesis as Foundation, because, as the lesson points out our understanding of reality is outlined in Genesis.

There are facts and then there are interpretations of facts. The biases, assumptions, presuppositions, beliefs we hold impact how we interpret facts.

The healthiest approach is, to the best of our ability, ensure our beliefs, biases, assumptions, are in harmony with how reality works, with the evidence and the facts and doesn't deny or ignore them.

Genesis lays out foundational basis for many beliefs that help us form a framework for understand reality. Here are some of those foundational beliefs:

- God is real and God is triune being of love
- God is the Creator
- The Earth and all life upon it were created by God
- Human beings were created by God in God's image
- God's laws are design laws—the protocols reality is built upon
- Sin is deviation from God's design which brings suffering and death and has its basis in lies which undermines trust and love
- Sin did not and does not come from God
- Death because of sin does not come from God
- The Sabbath as an aide to assist human beings in cooperating with God for holiness
- God's plan to heal and to save
- The worldwide flood
- The nature of humankind as mortal
- Marriage and family

As we undermine our belief in any of these foundational beliefs then we begin to corrupt our understanding of reality. This happens in a variety of ways:

- There is no God—we evolved from slime
- There is a god, but his law is imperial and sin is breaking his law and that god must use power to inflict death upon law breakers
- God uses death to create—the theistic evolution
- The Sabbath is a concept not a day, or the Sabbath is strictly Jewish, or the Sabbath is the 7th day but it is an arbitrary test of obedience that God will punish you for if you don't obey



- Human beings have immortality and can never die
- Marriage is an artificial construct made up by male dominated societies to control women
- Women were created to be subordinate to men or women were created equal but God decided after sin that they should be subordinated to men
- There was no worldwide flood
- Sin is a made-up concept by religions which are also made up to control people
- God’s plan of salvation is to do something to God to pay for our sin so God won’t torture and kill us
- Genesis is just a book of myths

These are just some examples of how the foundational ideas can be corrupted to either reject them totally, or to still believe them but in such a distorted way that people are still out of harmony with God and still don’t understand reality.

We achieve ever-increasingly accurate understanding of reality when we use the integrative evidence-based approach which harmonizes Scripture, Nature and Experience.

SUNDAY

Genesis 1, In the Beginning the Creation story.

When we consider the origins of life there are really only two overall theories—intelligent design—God created, or godless origins by natural forces all on its own without any intelligent input.

If we use the scientific method we would want to do experiments that we can observe and reproduce in which we get the same results each time. However, we cannot go back and test either theory of origins. So, we are left with the premises that each theory is built upon—and these can be tested. So let’s test them:

Godless Origins

God Created Origins

Something came from nothing

Something came from something else

Order came from chaos
without intelligent input

Order came from chaos
with intelligent input

Life came from non-living matter

Life came from another living organism

DNA gains information through
mutation

DNA degrades through mutation



Notice as we test these base premises upon which these two theories rest, it is not a mix some supporting one theory and some supporting the other—all of them, 100% support creation by God and refute the idea that life originated on its own.

Living organisms require three elements to exist and live: physical matter (atoms etc.), energy, and coded information stored in the DNA.

The theory of godless origins postulates and focuses exclusively upon the physical matter and energy and how they might have, in some primordial soup formed amino acids or DNA molecules. But they have no answer whatsoever for the third element required for life—the coded information stored in the DNA.

From my book *The Aging Brain: Proven Steps to Prevent Dementia and Sharpen Your Mind*

The idea that living beings originated on their own without any intelligent input would be similar to believing that a storm arose with high winds, rain and lightning that raged for years, and during this storm the strong winds blew rocks and sand at high speeds until some were shattered and worn down to formed letters of the alphabet. This is analogous to believing that the random forces of nature in some chemical soup with lightning strikes eventually formed DNA molecules. But, even if we accept that this happened (which is a big leap of blind, evidenceless faith) scientists still ignore the most critical aspect of what is required for life—the encoded information contained within the organized DNA sequences. Having an alphabet does not mean we have usable and functional information. To believe that random forces brought life about would require we not only believe the alphabet formed on its own, but beyond this we must also believe that the winds, rains, and lightning strikes—all on its own—organized the letters into the entire encyclopedia Britannica. Yet this is exactly what millions of good-hearted, honest, thinking people do believe.

But why would thinking, honest-of-heart, scientists choose to believe something that the evidence refutes? Because the historical alternative belief system is significantly more destructive! What is the historical alternative belief system—the one that reasonable people reject? The belief in an all-powerful god who functions no differently than the worst despots in human history—a god who says, “Love me or I will burn you in hell forever.”

This grotesque god-construct, rightly rejected by reasonable people, is pointedly described by Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion*:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”¹

¹ Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. 51.



So, in my view, the reason good-hearted thinking people reject God and the Genesis account is because they have been given two alternatives that are both lies—the godless view and the dictator god view and the godless view is preferable to the dictator god view.

This is why the 3 angels' messages of Revelation is so important at this time in history, because it calls people back to worship the Creator, Him who made the heavens, Earth, seas and fountains of water. It calls the godless to worship the Creator, but it also calls the imperial god worshippers to reject the false dictator-god they worship and embrace the Creator—which means reject imperial law with penal legal theologies and embrace design law with God's plan to heal and restore.

So, which worldview is more reasonable? The view of our Creator God of love who built reality to operate upon His design laws of love, truth, liberty.

The second paragraph states, “Darwinian evolution is contradictory to Scripture in every way, and attempts by some to harmonize it with the Bible makes Christians look silly.”

Darwinian evolution is the concept that species evolve over millions of years by mutation of the genes which confer new and improved abilities allowing them to compete more effectively for limited resources thus selecting out the less capable and retaining the more capable to reproduce thus over the generations causing the species to evolve or develop. It also taught transmutation of the species, one species evolving into another through this process.

Couple of points—Darwinian evolution really doesn't address origins science. It is a theory based on the observations of the world already created. One couldn't have natural selection occurring before there was life. So, don't confuse evolution—things changing, adapting, evolving over time with origins of life—they are different concepts.

There has never been any scientific evidence given of one species mutating into another species. This theory is still taught, but it is taught without supporting evidence, and not just without supporting evidence, in the face of contradicting evidence. Yet, it is still believed by millions.

Evolution—the process of a species changing or evolving based on environmental pressures does occur. God created us to be able to adapt and change, so this idea of change or adaptation is not contrary to God's design for life.

Natural selection—the process of the least fit being selected out also occurs, the less capable individuals or traits are pressured by survival pressures toward elimination from the gene pool. But, selecting out the least capable, or another way to say that—the most damaged, is not the same as saying those that survive are advancing and improving. The idea of natural selection takes the observation that the least fit don't survive and draws a false conclusion—a lie in fact—that is the core to the entire evolutionary theory and that lie is, since the least fit don't survive and the more fit in a population is surviving, that means the more fit are actually advancing. This is not so—in fact all members of each generation of each species is genetically degrading, some more some less but each generation of every species is less genetically fit than the generation before.



In the human genome each generation of humans has at least 1000 new damaging mutations that the generation before didn't have. So, selecting out the most damaged that can't survive still happens, but it doesn't mean the survivors are more fit than the previous generation—they are not.

Evolutionary theory has essentially only two truths—things adapt or change over time and natural selection selects out the least fit. All the other so-called points of evolutionary theory are proven false:

- Species advance via mutation of the DNA code—false—every gene mutation thus far identified degrades the species, none have been identified that makes the species healthier or advance
- Species evolve from one to another through mutation—there has not been one example of this
- Darwin's original theory, represented by the different beaks of finches has now been proven false. He theorized that the changes occurred over millions of years, and scientists later added in the concept of DNA mutation. But this has now been tested and the various finches have the same DNA code. Their DNA does not have mutation of the sequences that caused the beaks to be different. The beak differences are caused by epigenetic changes which occurs in 1-2 generations. This is exactly consistent with what the Bible teaches, that God created us with ability to create beings in our image. We have the ability to make choices and those choices alter, not the DNA sequences, but the instructions on how those sequences are expressed and those instructions are passed down 3-4 generations, they will keep passing down if the behaviors continue in the subsequent generations reinforcing the changes. Thus, again the Bible is right and Darwinian evolution is proven false.²

Now, EG White, one of the founders of the SDA church and contemporary of Charles Darwin, had a different view of things. She, with her third grade education, somehow was able to have scientific knowledge well beyond that of all her contemporaries that has now been proven to be true. Specifically, she promoted the principles of epigenetics—that our actions change our DNA expression and we pass those changes along, without even knowing about DNA. Here are a couple of quotes:

Parents ... by indulgence have strengthened their animal passions. And as these have strengthened, the moral and intellectual faculties have become weak. The spiritual has been overborne by the brutish. Children are born with the animal propensities largely developed, the parents' own stamp of character having been given to them.... The brain force is weakened, and memory becomes deficient.... The sins of the parents will be visited upon their children because the parents have given them the stamp of their own lustful propensities.—Testimonies for the Church 2:391 (1870). 1MCP 136.1

² Abzhanov, Arhat; Meredith Protas, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant, Clifford J. Tabin (September 3, 2004), "[Bmp4 and Morphological Variation of Beaks in Darwin's Finches](#)", *Science* (USA: AAAS) **305** (5689): 1462–1465, doi:10.1126/science.1098095, ISSN 0036-8075, OCLC 1644869, PMID 15353802, retrieved 2008-03-08

Abzhanov, Arhat; Winston P. Kuo, Christine Hartmann, B. Rosemary Grant, Peter R. Grant and Clifford J. Tabin (August 3, 2006), "[The calmodulin pathway and evolution of elongated beak morphology in Darwin's finches](#)", *Nature* (UK: Nature Publishing Group) **442**(7102): 563–567, doi:10.1038/nature04843, ISSN 0028-0836, OCLC 1586310, PMID 16885984, retrieved 2008-03-08



The nobler the aims, the higher the mental and spiritual endowments, and the better developed the physical powers of the parents, the better will be the life equipment they give their children. In cultivating that which is best in themselves, parents are exerting an influence to mold society and to uplift future generations.... 1MCP 139.1

And this is what the science actually shows—our life choices change us, alter our gene expression and we pass along not only the DNA sequences but this epigenetic modifications to our children either passing along advantages or disadvantages.

But, EG White somehow understood it was more than lifestyle choices, it was also mental processes, attitudes of the heart:

Every woman about to become a mother, whatever may be her surroundings, should encourage constantly a happy, cheerful, contented disposition, knowing that for all her efforts in this direction she will be repaid tenfold in the physical, as well as in the moral, character of her offspring. Nor is this all. By habit she can accustom herself to cheerful thinking, and thus encourage a happy state of mind and cast a cheerful reflection of her own happiness of spirit upon her family and those with whom she associates. 1MCP 131.2

The thoughts and feelings of the mother will have a powerful influence upon the legacy she gives her child. If she allows her mind to dwell upon her own feelings, if she indulges in selfishness, if she is peevish and exacting, the disposition of her child will testify to the fact. Thus many have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.—The Signs of the Times, September 13, 1910. (Temperance, 171.) 1MCP 132.1

Well, brain science proves this to be true:

- Study of over 4000 mothers and their children
- Followed for over 18 years
- Mothers with negative, pessimistic, depressive thinking patterns when pregnant increased the risk of their child being depressed 18 years later.
- This association remained after accounting for maternal and offspring depression.
- The thought patterns of the mother accounted for 21% of the association between maternal and child depression. (Am Journal of Psychiatry 2013; 170:434-441).

And if mother is highly stressed during pregnancy—which may not be because she has historically stressful patterns of thinking, but tragedy could occur while pregnant, husband could be killed or deployed to war etc. But if she is highly stressed during pregnancy:

- Mother's stress hormones cross the placenta
- Interferes with the stress response “braking system”
- This occurs through epigenetic modification



- Children are more stress prone, irritable, moody, and they pass this along to their children - unless new experience introduce new gene expression. (Medina, J. Psychiatric Times, April 2010, p. 16)

Again, the Biblical worldview is proven more correct and scientifically accurate than the evolutionary worldview.

The lesson points out in the third paragraph that God as Creator not only created physical matter, but also time and as such lives outside of time. This is quite important—and true. God lives on a plane of existence beyond our full experience and comprehension. Some people cannot handle this and believe that if God lives outside of time, and because of that is able to know the future, then God’s foreknowledge of our choices takes away our freedom to choose. Because they are sensitive to God’s character of love and realize love requires freedom, with all the best intentions they create a lie—because they have a false premise. The lie they create is that God either cannot know the future or chooses to put a blindfold on Himself and not look into the future because, in their view if He did we wouldn’t be free. The false premise this is based upon is that God’s foreknowledge takes away our freedom to choose.

It is really quite simple—to God, who lives outside of time, what is it that informs Him of our future choices (note future to us—not future to God as God lives in all points of time simultaneously)? God knows our future choices when *we make them*. In other words, it is our act of choosing that informs God of the choice. If we don’t choose it, God doesn’t know it because it didn’t and doesn’t happen. Because God lives outside of time, to us right now, God is aware of our choices next year, but He only know what we choose next year because next year we are the ones that choose it.

One other point, in Genesis 1:1 the language “In the beginning” is not speaking of the beginning of all things—but the Genesis 1 “in the beginning” is the beginning of this solar system, specifically the terraforming of earth and the sun, moon, stars of this solar system. Job 38:7 informs us the angels sang for joy when the earth was created. So, that means the angels already existed, thus Genesis doesn’t speak to creating the entire universe, just this solar system.

MONDAY

The lesson points out that Genesis teaches that the earth was created during a 7-day week, in which each day was 24 hours long. It rejects the idea that suggests Genesis is metaphorical book and the days represent long eons of time in which life slowly evolved on earth, or that God uses evolutionary methods to create life over eons of time.

Why is it not rational to believe that Genesis is referring to long periods of time and why does the account make much more sense to believe these are 24-hour days?

- Plant life was created on day 3 and the local sun was created on day 4, if it was thousands of years or more between the creation of plant life and the sun then all life would have died before



the sun was created. So, the sequence of creation also gives evidence to the author's intended meaning that the Bible is teaching literal 24-hour days.

- The idea that God used some aspects of evolution to create life is also irrational to the Christian and is part of Satan's lie because it merges Satan's principles of death with God's principles of life. To create through evolution requires death, the killing off of those less adaptable so that through natural selection the strong survive. This is the theory of Satan's kingdom and any attempts to introduce this into Christian thought corrupts the truth about God and His kingdom of love.

This philosophy of the merging life and death is called dualism—the coexistence of both good and evil as a requirement for life to exist. This is a foundational belief in the eastern philosophies and it is part of theistic evolution. The idea of life and death both being part of God's character and kingdom is a lie. It is Satan's goal for the eternal coexistence of both good and evil, but the Bible teaches that in God there is only light and no darkness whatsoever and that sin and death are intruders which one day will be permanently and completely eliminated from God's creation.

How has dualism entered mainstream Christian doctrines? Via the imperial law lie, in which God in order to be just must punish sinners by either killing them or torturing them in hell for all eternity. In both views, God is a being who is the source of life and the source of death or suffering inflicted under the guise of justice—thus dualism—Satan's worldview.

We must reject this, come back to worship the Creator and understand His laws as design laws and then we have a holy God who is not the source of death.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about the Sabbath.

The day, months, and years are all marked by the movements of the earth and moon. But there is no astronomic reason for the seven-day week. This is quite profound evidence to those who want to claim there is no God or deny the Genesis account of creation. Ask them to explain the basis for the seven-day week, which is the week through essentially every society as far back as recorded history.

But, what is the significance of the Sabbath?

It is all about context—when it came into being and its purpose. The Sabbath was created, Jesus said, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Mk 2:27,28 NKJV)

The Sabbath serves Jesus, Jesus doesn't serve the Sabbath—but how? What purpose did Jesus have in creating the Sabbath?



Jesus was speaking to the Jews when He said the Sabbath was made for man, meaning it wasn't made just for the Jews, but for the human race.

But for what purpose? What was happening in the universe when earth was created? War over God's right to rule. And what does the Sabbath reveal?

The first six days of creation week reveals God has power, but it is the seventh day, when God rested from using power, that reveals His character, truth, presented in love, leaving people free to think for themselves. Thus, the Sabbath is evidence that Satan lied about God. If Satan were correct, there would be no Sabbath.

Exodus tells us the Sabbath is a sign that God makes us holy, but what does this mean?

In the larger setting of the war between God and Satan, over God's character, government of love and methods of love, what does the Sabbath reveal?

It reveals God's character – that He doesn't use power to coerce, that He leaves us free. Thus, Sabbath observance is about the free exercise of our power of choice to acknowledge God and live in harmony with Him.

One of the positions that we at Come and Reason have taken is that the Sabbath is a sign, an evidence, of God's kingdom and methods of love—of design law government. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. We have asked, if you sin on the Sabbath have you made the Sabbath less holy? If you do righteousness on the Sabbath have you made it more holy? Do our actions in any way impact the holiness of the Sabbath? So are we keeping the Sabbath holy or ourselves holy? And can we keep ourselves holy only one day in seven? So, the Sabbath was made for man—as a sign, flag, pennant, reminder, evidence to us that all week we are thinking Remember the Sabbath day—what it reveals—Our God is real, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He is love and His kingdom is the kingdom of love and operates on design law. So, live in harmony with God's kingdom and principles all week long. We have taught this for some time.

I read this quote last week, but it is so powerful I wanted to read it again:

“All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ, and will exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works.” 6T 353



What is true Sabbath keeping, avoiding certain behaviors one day in seven, or being transformed in heart to live out God's principles all week long while we look forward to the day that shines as evidence of God's kingdom and methods of love.

Understand the issue of Sabbath versus Sunday is not about the days themselves, it is about what the days represent. They are signs or marks—consider them like flags of nations. The US Flag is a sign or mark of the USA, but it is not the USA, but those who love the USA (or any person who loves their nation) respects and values the flag. They wave it, they display it, they don't throw it in the dirt, burn it or mock it. Not because the flag is magical or has power, but because of what it represents.

Likewise, Sabbath became a special day by Creation—it was Created by God as a day of rest and thus it is a sign or evidence of Design law and God's kingdom of love, truth, freedom.

Sunday became a day of rest or worship day by legislation—by human counsels and governments passing in committees a law that set it aside as the day of worship. Thus, Sunday becomes a sign or flag of imperialism of a god who makes up rules and inflicts punishment, of the systems of this fallen world, of the beastly systems, of the penal legal religious dogmas.

So, what if a person observes the seventh-day Sabbath as their weekly religious day of rest, worshipping the Creator God on that day—does that mean they are right with God? What if they do so teaching that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience, a rule that God made up, and if you don't observe it God will punish you? Consider those who crucified Christ, did they worship on the wrong day? No, they had the right day, but the wrong law—i.e. imperial law and thus they worshipped the wrong imperial god and rejected the Creator God and crucified Him.

We must grow up past level four moral development, we must reject the imperial penal legal view of God and embrace the truth of God as Creator. Only then will we be true Sabbath keepers who practice His principles all week long.

What about those who teach the truth about God's character and methods of love, His design laws, but hold religious services on a day other than Sabbath? When governments begin enforcing worship upon pain of punishment, those who are like Jesus in character will not go along with such enforcement and will leave that style of worship and join with all those who honor God and His methods of truth, love and freedom

In C.S. Lewis' last book of the Narnia series Lewis describes a Calormene soldier named Emeth and his encounter with Aslan the lion. Emeth was a worshipper of Tash, and as a result was terrified when he came face to face with Aslan. This is that encounter from the book:

I fell at his feet and thought surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him.

But Aslan's response?



Son thou art welcome. But I said, alas Lord I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child all the service thou hast done to Tash I account as service done to me.

I questioned the Glorious One: Lord, is it then true that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled and said, It is false. Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath's sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted”.

Emeth questions once more:

Lord, I have been seeking Tash all my days.

Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou shouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.

Is it ultimately about the Sabbath, or the Lord of the Sabbath?

WEDNESDAY

Marriage—a relationship of love, as God designed in which two individuals become united as one—not one individual, but one in heart, love, service, other-centeredness, sharing common purpose, goals, methods, principles.

Marriage was designed to give created beings the most godlike of abilities and experiences. It was created with two beings of equal worth, value and standing under God's design law, but who were created with complementary abilities that would result in expansion of love, awareness, experience, development, and achievement as they united in the bonds of marital love as God designed. In other words, God's design would result in greater development, experience of godliness and achievement than either could experience alone.

And of course, Satan hates God's design and wants to corrupt it. After the fall, fear and selfishness replaced love and trust and instead of two co-equals operating in other-centered love, domination and control infected God's design. All kinds of mistreatment, abuse, exploitation, betrayal and heartache have occurred as the marriage relationship has been attacked by methods and principles other than love, trust, truth, and freedom.

Satan attacked God's design in other ways—physically in which God's plan of procreation, the two joining in love to create beings in their image, was damaged and infertility emerged and heartache over inability to have children has plagued humankind.



An online listener Maria Averill, sent in this question:

Is there any way Dr. Jennings can address Genesis 3:16 Where God says to Eve,

“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

If they are suffering the natural consequences to their sin why would God feel the need to add sorrow to it? That seems out of character for Him.

You are so right—this is a translation and makes it sound like God is inflicting what He is pronouncing. God as the source of truth is now informing His beloved and cherished children what the consequences of their choices will be. Their sin has changed them and because of this God’s design is altered with fear and selfishness—pain, heartache, domination and control will now contaminate life. So, if I were to paraphrase this it would read like this:

“Because my design of love has now been replaced with fear and selfishness, having and raising children will be very hard—filled with sorrow. Fearful, you will seek protection from your stronger husband, but he will dominate you.”

Over the last several decades in Western societies, the definition of marriage, one man and one woman, has changed to include same-sex relationships. Many Christians have been upset over this and there has been conflict in society and in churches because of it.

I thought a little history of marriage might be helpful.

In ancient times, marriage was a community or family event in which a male and female committed themselves to be husband and wife. There were no governments involved, just the public commitment of the two people along with their families’ and acknowledgement of the community.

Old Testament Levitical law codified certain aspects of marriage which was designed to protect women from being arbitrarily discarded and replaced by their husbands. And it remained male and female. But during Bible times a man could have more than one female as wife.

In early Christianity, marriage remained a family and community event. One male and one female, polygamy was banned.

As the church became organized the Roman Church recognized marriage between a man and a woman as a sacred relationship. Marriages for centuries were recorded in the church records.

Wikipedia states the following:



As part of the Protestant Reformation, the role of recording marriages and setting the rules for marriage passed to the state, reflecting Martin Luther's view that marriage was a "worldly thing".^[61] By the 17th century, many of the Protestant European countries had a state involvement in marriage.

As part of the Counter-Reformation, in 1563 the Council of Trent decreed that a Roman Catholic marriage would be recognized only if the marriage ceremony was officiated by a priest with two witnesses. The Council also authorized a Catechism, issued in 1566, which defined marriage as, "The conjugal union of man and woman, contracted between two qualified persons, which obliges them to live together throughout life."^[63] In the early modern period, John Calvin, and his Protestant colleagues reformulated Christian marriage by enacting the Marriage Ordinance of Geneva, which imposed "The dual requirements of state registration and church consecration to constitute marriage"^[63] for recognition.

Prior to the Protestant Reformation the state governments had no role in marriage. It was the Protestant Reformation, which wanted a means to record marriages free of the Roman Church that led to the involvement of the state and the marriage licenses. Over the course of time various legal privileges were attached to marriage—tax benefits, inheritance benefits, next of kin rights etc.

Do we now find that the merger of church and state is causing problems? Christians invited the state into the marriage institution, and now the state is redefining it, and many Christians are unhappy about this. Should this be another lesson in church/state relations?

Here are some other questions about marriage:

- Is there a difference between what you choose to do in your personal life, and what one should seek government to do in regard to marriage?
- Is there a difference between Biblical marriage and marriage as sanctioned by a human government, i.e. legal marriage?
- Were the Reformers correct to suggest a person isn't married in God's eyes until they get a legal marriage by the state?
- Can someone get married by the state and not be married in God's eyes?
- Should the church seek to get the state to enforce the church's view of marriage?
- Would you be happy if Muslims became a majority in your country and legalized polygamy?
- Is there a difference in spiritual union, marriage blessed by God, and legal marriage?
- Do the state and the church serve the same master?
- Do the state and the church have the same agenda?
- Do the state and the church concern themselves with the same elements of marriage?
- Church is concerned with God's blessing, unity of two individuals in a holy covenant, spiritual wholeness, honoring God with one's life, revealing the truth of God's character as he designed marriage to do, family integrity, raising children in Godly ways, etc.



- The state is concerned with legal contracts, who inherits whose property, who is the legal guardian, who makes legal health care decisions, not who is united by God.
- Should, adults, in our society be allowed to enter into legal contracts regarding the disposition of their property, guardianship, medical decision-making etc.? What if those adults are the same sex?
- Can we live in peace with those who enter into such contracts, even if they call in marriage?
- Is every “marriage” blessed by God—regardless of whether it is heterosexual or homosexual?
- Can people get legally married, but not experience the marital union as God designed?
- Are some marriages actually traps of Satan?

So, is there a difference between a church sanctioning an action, and the state sanctioning it?

What system do you prefer – the one in which such matters are decided by the church – as in the Middle Ages, the one we have in which these matters are decided by the state, or a mixed system in which one has to get both the state and church to agree?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, “God declared...” What do you understand the purpose of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to be?

What do you take from the name of this tree?

To you see it is a tree of reality—it is the place where Adam and Eve would decide what they would know.

This is life eternal that they might **know** you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent John 17:3

This knowledge of Good and Evil, wasn’t theoretical knowledge, it wasn’t cognitive knowledge. God and the angels had already informed Adam and Eve about Satan, about evil, about the consequences of death. Adam and Eve had information, factual knowledge. That is not what the Tree was about—it was about experience, knowing by experience Good or Evil, by the choice to trust and believe God, or to believe lies and disbelieve God thereby breaking trust with Him.

God tells them, at this tree you will have knowledge—choose well, choose not to partake and you will know Good—you will know love, trust, loyalty, devotion, maturity, integrity, joy, peace, and godliness all of this will solidify in your character. But if you choose to partake the fruit, you will know fear, selfishness, insecurity, guilt, shame, distrust, pain, suffering and death—you will know evil.



God already knew evil—not in His character, but in His heart as His heavenly home had been fractured and He was already suffering the heartache of betrayal, disaffection, being lied about and the loss of His most loved angel. God did not want humankind to know this kind of pain, suffering, heartache. He wanted humankind do know only good, but this required them to choose to trust God and choose the good in order for them to know it.

One of the founders of the SDA church wrote:

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; **but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character.** . . . It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule. {CC 13.3}

FRIDAY

Read question 3, “If the Bible...” It is when Christians are level four and below and promote an imperial God that requires them to believe without evidence, to follow rules that cause harm that they are called closed minded, because they are.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Power of Love Training and Equipping Course is now available online at comeandreason.com All presentations are available video and also in MP3, the power point slides are available with and without the Come and Reason Branding logos and the Syllabus, with its reference guide and study questions is available for download. We encourage you to use this material in small group Bible studies or use the slides and present the series at your church.

September 17-19 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the AACC National Conference in Dallas, TX

October 3, 2020: Come and Reason will have a one day seminar in Chattanooga TN on Healing the Mind, Recovering from Sexual Abuse, the Impact of Digital Media on Kids and more. Details coming soon.

October 9-10, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Lakewood SDA church in Lakewood OH

November 6-7, 2020: Dr. Jennings will be speaking at an AACC River Conference at Plano, TX. More info at <http://theriverconference.com/>