

## **The Significance of Genesis 1-11.**

*Based on a message by Dr. John C. Whitcomb given at the Institute for Creation Research on its 25th anniversary and Retirement of its founder, Dr Henry Morris (Nov. 10, 1995).*

Twenty-five years ago our Lord established the Institute for Creation Research as a significant public testimony to the absolute truth of His written Word, especially the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Surely, in God's providence, this is an appropriate time to stop, to look back, to look around us, to look ahead, and especially to look up, to God.

Tonight I invite you to join with me for a few minutes in thinking about two questions. First, of course, what has God been pleased to accomplish through the Institute for Creation Research during this quarter of a century? and second, where do we go from here? The emphasis tonight is not science or technology. I have no fear whatsoever with regard to the tremendous qualifications--the brilliance in fact--of this team that God has assembled here, in handling the natural sciences. My contribution tonight, I trust, will be, where do we go from here in the light of God's Word, Biblically, theologically--as a fellowship of Christian people.

It was not 25 years ago, but 2,500 years ago that a prophet of God posed a question--a heavy question, in fact--to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judea, while he was supervising the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Older Jews saw it as a pathetic shadow of David and Solomon's masterpiece, and they were deeply depressed. Then came the prophet's question: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10). Indeed, small things must never be despised if God is in them. From tiny acorns a whole forest of mighty oaks may grow-if their God-designed reproductive codes are placed into an environment that protects and encourages growth.

After the Second World War, the cause of Biblical and scientific creationism seemed almost to have vanished from the face of the earth. Compromises with uniformitarian evolutionism abounded on every hand in Christian denominations and schools. It was during the War, while I was a student at Princeton University, that God saved me by His infinite grace through a small Bible class on that campus. But for ten long years I remained loyal to the evolutionary time-table of earth history which I had been taught by my father and by the Princeton geology department. I tried to solve the problem by adopting the very popular gap theory of Genesis 1:1-2, not realizing that I was drastically compromising and distorting: (1) the time-block of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11; (2) the stupendous effects of the Fall and the Curse as described in Romans 5 and 8; and (3) the global effects of the Flood as set forth in Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, and 1 and 2 Peter. I am still discovering that no revelation of God, including original creation, can be understood in isolation from the entire revelation of Scripture.

But God was merciful. In 1947, after returning to Princeton from the war in Europe, I was greatly impressed by a book written by Henry Morris entitled, *That You Might Believe*. But it was two years after I began teaching Genesis at Grace Theological Seminary in the fall of 1951 that I experienced a profound change in my understanding of the Biblical concept of ultimate origins. In September, 1953, Henry Morris came to our campus at Winona Lake, Indiana, and presented a paper, "Biblical Evidence for a Recent Creation and Universal Deluge." I was amazed at his insights, and began what turned out to be six years of correspondence and two meetings, eventuating in the publication of our co-

authored volume, *The Genesis Flood*, in 1961.

Thus, only two years after the great 1959 Darwinian Centennial Convocation in Chicago, which served as a kind of public funeral service for Biblical and scientific creationism, God graciously enabled us to produce a book that attempted to honor Him and His infallible record of ultimate origins. In spite of its inadequacies, God has apparently used it to encourage many Christians around the world, including professional scientists, to take a strong stand for the literal truth of Genesis 1-11. Ten years later, in 1970, the Institute for Creation Research was established here in California to help promote these great concepts.

And now, 25 years still later, we are gathered here to honor a true hero of the faith, Henry M. Morris. He would certainly not want to be considered as such, and many others, such as Duane T. Gish, have labored heroically with him in this worthy cause. But it is obvious to many of God's people around the world that Henry Morris has been highly instrumental, under God, in the modern revival of Biblical and scientific creationism.

God's record of original creation events, and the reflection of those events in the world and universe around us, have long been denied, distorted, and twisted out of recognition by people who, while claiming to be Christians, are at the same time showing deep respect for the great golden image of neo-Darwinian evolutionism and the uniformitarian pedestal upon which it stands. But now, at last, as the 20th century draws to a close, clearly visible banners have been lifted up by our gracious God, that few can honestly ignore. Creation-science organizations have sprung up in many parts of the world. God's marvelous works of creation--their design, the order and manner in which they were created, and the duration of creation events--are now more clearly understood than ever before in history. Hundreds of seminars, courses, conferences, tours, debates, publications, and audio and video tapes have made these divine realities widely known.

The battle is only beginning, of course, but one may safely predict that the God-honored and time-tested grammatical and historical method of interpreting Genesis 1-11 will never be permitted by our God to perish from the earth.

One of the truly enlightening and helpful insights that Henry Morris shared with me many years ago, in one of his smallest books, *The Remarkable Birth of the Planet Earth*, I would like to share with you this evening.

Henry pointed out to me, first of all, how intricately and completely the New Testament builds upon Genesis 1-11. Did you know, friend, that every chapter of Genesis 1-11 is referred to somewhere in the New Testament? (See 107 such references listed in Appendix 11 of *The Defender's Bible*.) Did you know that every one of the New Testament writers, all nine of them, refer to Genesis 1-11? Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ referred to each of the first seven chapters of Genesis, and every one of these references presupposes the historical truth of the events referred to? Genesis 1:27 (Matthew 19:4) male and female Genesis 2:24 (Matthew 19:5) one flesh Genesis 3:4 (John 8:44) Satan a liar Genesis 4:8f (Luke 11:51) blood of Abel Genesis 5:2 (Mark 10:6) male and female Genesis 6:3f (Matthew 24:37f) days of Noah Genesis 7 (Luke 17:27) Flood destroyed them all

Many insist that Genesis 1-11 is full of poetic, dramatic thoughts that aren't necessarily historically and literally true. Yes, there is a poem in Genesis 4:23-25, the *Sword Song* of

Lamech to his two wives, and you can tell it's poetry because of its Hebrew parallelism and fixed pairs. All the rest of Genesis 1-11, however, is absolutely sober, straightforward, matter-of-fact, continuous, sequential history!

Look how the Old Testament builds on Genesis 1-11. Those first eleven chapters merge right into Genesis 12-50, with no hint whatever that mythology is changing into historical narration. The Genesis 1 time-block is precisely confirmed by God in Exodus 20:11 and Exodus 31:16. Many, many passages in the Old Testament, too many to even list for you, refer to, quote, or presuppose the creation events of Genesis 1-2. One of my all-time favorites is Jeremiah 10:11, which is the only verse in the whole book of Jeremiah not written in Hebrew. It's written in Aramaic, which was the language spoken by all the Gentile peoples of the Fertile Crescent. In that one verse, God-inspired especially for the Gentile world, we read these amazing words: "Any god that did not create the heavens and the earth will perish from under the heavens and from the earth." Friends, that thrills me, because we worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and the Son of God, the second Person, is none other than our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is infinitely qualified to be worshiped because, as a matter of fact, all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was ever made (cf. John 1:3). He will never "perish from under the heavens and from the earth." He is the Creator of all things!

Adam's sin is mentioned in Job 31. The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are repeated in 1 Chronicles. Noah's righteous life is referred to twice in Ezekiel 14. Noah and the Flood are referred to in Isaiah 54, and the magnitude of the Flood is emphasized in Psalm 29 and Psalm 104. The dispersion from Babel is the basis for an amazing statement in Deuteronomy 32. So, friends, note what this all amounts to. Not only the New Testament, but the whole Old Testament presupposed the absolute literal truth of the opening eleven chapters. Therefore, if that foundation were to crumble or disappear--please face it--the whole written Word of God would collapse. In the light of all this, how can any faithful servant of God or student of Holy Scripture ever say that Genesis 1-11 is non-literal, non-historical drama or poetry? That position is totally impossible.

That brings us to our second question this evening, namely, "Where do we go from here--theologically, Biblically, and spiritually?" We thank the Lord that both Henry Morris and his son John are deeply committed to the entire Bible as God's written revelation. I trust that all of us here tonight have come to believe that a recent creation of the universe in six literal days, the cosmic curse that followed Adam's sin, and the geographical universality of the Flood are essential truths for Biblical Christianity. But if we are to expect God's fullest blessing upon the ICR and upon all of our Christian ministries until He comes, we must also believe that these precious truths, vitally important as they are, constitute only a part of God's written revelation. They must never be isolated from the rest of the Bible and viewed as sufficient in themselves. Those precious truths in Genesis 1-11 were certainly not sufficient in Jesus' day, were they? Why not? Because the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who crucified God's Son (Acts 2 and 4) would have been willing to die for the literal interpretation of the foundational chapters of Genesis; but, tragedy of all tragedies, they rejected their long-promised Messiah, because they could not fathom the depth of their depravity and the absolute necessity of salvation by God's grace through faith in His entire revelation of truth.

So also, today, we hear of scientists who are repudiating evolutionism to some extent or other and even talking about creation, while at the same time rejecting our Lord Jesus Christ and even denying the existence of a personal God.

But that is the exact opposite of the position and goal of the ICR, and that is why there is great hope for its future, in the providence of God. In 1970, Henry Morris spelled out the doctrinal standards of Christian Heritage College and the ICR in the 14 points of the original statement of faith. These included commitments to "the absolute integrity of Holy Scripture," "the redemptive work of Jesus Christ," and His imminent return for His Church before the Tribulation Period and His thousand-year kingdom on the earth, when the things that God began in Genesis will be finally completed on the earth, and thus will serve as a retrospect, a little glimpse of the original perfection of the world, that only a literal interpretation of Genesis could reveal. These perspectives have been faithfully incorporated into several of Dr. Morris' creation-science books and his commentaries on Genesis, Job, and Revelation, and now in his Defender's Bible.

No creationist organization can truly honor the Creator without this kind of commitment to His entire written Word. The remaining 1170 chapters of the Bible not only build upon and presuppose the first eleven chapters, but also illuminate them. Only through Christ and His apostles can we fully appreciate the writings of Moses. Christ confirmed that Genesis was inerrant and infallible, but He also rendered Genesis insufficient by virtue of later, fuller revelation. Not erroneous, but insufficient. Why? What do we mean by that? Only through the New Testament do we learn of the involvement of the three divine Persons--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--in the creation of angels and of the universe. Only in the New Testament can we discover the true significance of "one flesh" marriage (Gen. 2); or the identity of the serpent (Gen. 3); the magnitude of the Curse; the Person who would crush the serpent's head; the eschatological significance of the Genesis Flood, and so on.

What God recorded in Genesis is absolutely perfect! But it is not all that God wants us to know about Him. Only the full collection of 66 inspired books is both perfect and complete. In spite of the new popularity of the so-called progressive or process creationism in evangelical circles today, there is no 67th book of divinely-inspired revelation, namely, modern science, to tell us how God really created the world! Such thinking threatens the entire Word of God, not simply Genesis 1-11. With so-called "modern science" as our final guide, no supernatural works of God, including the resurrection of Christ, will survive (see 1 Cor. 2:4-16).

Another commitment of Henry Morris that gives us hope for the future of the ICR is the primacy of the local church. All around us we see parachurch organizations becoming self-sufficient and independent of God-honoring local churches, with little sense of accountability to them. This can only lead to spiritual arrogance and decline. No member of the body of Christ on earth can function effectively for Him without a proper relationship to other members of the body of Christ, especially to those who have earned respect for their faithfulness to God's Word. With the continuing presence of our sin natures, even after new birth, and the availability of Satan to deceive those of us who take our eyes off the Lord, we desperately need God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the entire Bible, and each other. Friends, we can't go it alone.

Finally, there is hope for ICR because its human founder has stated, in the current (November) issue of Acts and Facts: "It is vital that we maintain a strong and clearly Biblical stand, not only on creationism, but also in our Christian character and conduct." That is surely the greatest challenge of all. The apostle Paul asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" His answer was this: "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5). Our Lord Jesus implied the same thing when He said: "Without me ye can do nothing"

(John 15:5). The apostle Peter gave us this priority: before we "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you," we are to "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts" (1 Pet. 3:15). And we are to give our answers "with meekness and fear, having a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:15,16). Around us everywhere lie the ruins of once-great Christian ministries. They may have had brilliant leaders and great visibility. But without genuine godliness, they were simply disasters waiting to happen.

Henry, it has been a tremendous personal privilege and blessing from the Lord to have known you and to have shared with you in the battle for creation truth to some small extent during these forty years. May your latter days be even greater than the former, as you continue, after official retirement, to serve our Lord and to promote His precious Word around the world.

And John, may our faithful Lord enable you to receive, cherish, protect, and perpetuate into the next spiritual generation the marvelous treasures of Biblical and scientific creationism which He has been entrusting to you for many years. You and your father and the entire staff of the Institute for Creation Research may be assured of our prayers in the days to come.

May God richly bless you, in Jesus' Name.

Amen