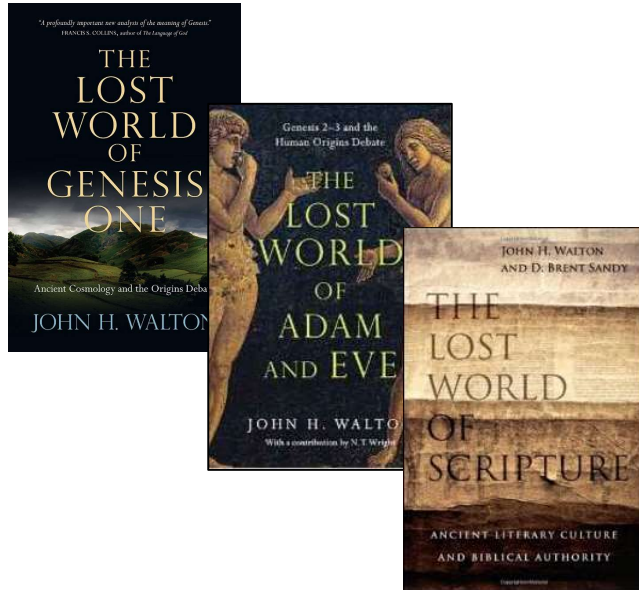


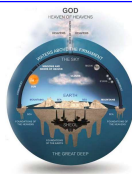
Last year I taught a class on Genesis 1-3 from an Ancient Near Eastern Perspective

Phillip Cornwell
Eastside Church
of Christ

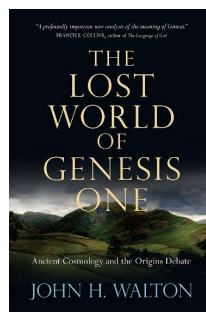


1

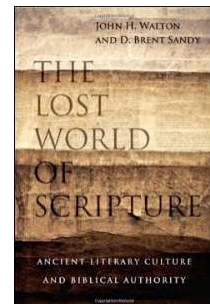
In this class, I will try to summarize what we did in that 9 week series



Introduction and
background



Genesis 1 & 2



Written vs
oral culture

2

Let's start with a few questions

In what ways does our culture affect the way we interpret scripture?

What do you do when the Bible and science appear to be in conflict?

3

I'll tell you some of my conclusions to my earlier Genesis class

Intelligent, faithful Christians who believe in the infallible, inspired Word of God can disagree on this issue.

This is not a salvation issue.

We need to try to understand the text to the best of our ability.

Genesis and creation should never be a stumbling block to somebody becoming a Christian. Christ is the stumbling block.

4

Review from last year

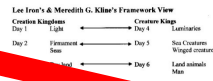
Various views:



24 hour view
(young earth
creationism)



Day age (old earth
creationism)



Framework

They're all asking the wrong question!

We need
original a

Our Goal:

way the
ext.

The most faithful
interpretation of Scripture

There should be no conflict between science and the Bible,
because the Bible is not a book of science.

5

What do these Scriptures mean using a "plain reading" view of Scripture?

Job 28:24 for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

Isaiah 40:22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

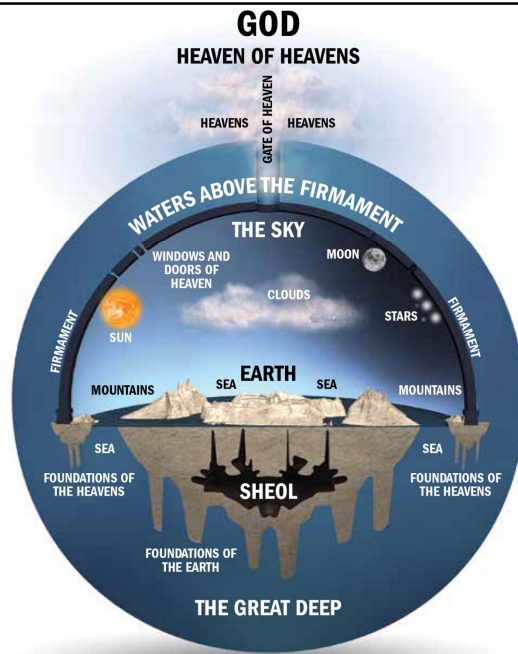
Genesis 1:7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

6

The earth is flat, there is distance between east and west, the earth has “ends” and a “foundation,” there are “waters above,” etc.

The ancient Near East had a different conception of the world.



TAKEN FROM THE *NIV FAITHLIFE ILLUSTRATED STUDY BIBLE*

7

What do these Scriptures mean using a “plain reading” view of Scripture?

Ecclesiastes 1:5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

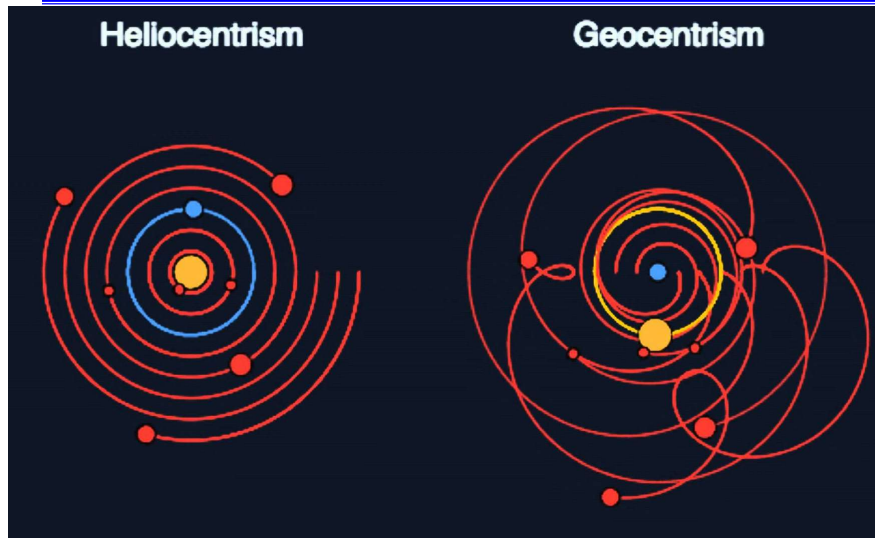
Joshua 10:13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, ...

1 Chronicles 16:30 Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.

Psalms 104:5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.

8

The earth doesn't move and the sun does



We get into problems when we try to read scientific ideas into texts that are not intended to convey any sort of science – this is called concordism.

9

Which of these translations is easier to understand?

Ps 40:8

Option 1: "I delight to do your will, O my God; thy law is within my bowels."

or

Option 2: "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

Psalms 103:8

Option 1: "The LORD is ... slow to anger, abounding in love."

or

Option 2: "The LORD is ... long of nose, abounding in love."

10

The Bible never intends to reveal science (which is good – science is always changing)

Biblical authority is tied to the author's intent – are they trying to convey a scientific truth or something else?

In the Bible, God reveals his work in the world, but he doesn't reveal how the world works.

Therefore, we don't need to believe everything they believed (they did believe that there was a solid sky). Setting aside such culturally bound ideas does not jeopardize the text's message or authority.

11

Biblical translation is difficult because we need to determine:

- What do the original words mean (not the English translation) at the time it was written? (no dictionaries)
- What do the words mean in context? (example: contronym)
- What do the words mean in the culture in which it was written?
- What is the genre of the writing?

Let's look at some examples in English. What do these phrases mean?

- "Have a heart"
- "It cost me an arm and a leg"
- "I live on the first floor"
- "Blood is thicker than water"
- "Stop throwing shade"
- "_____ is gay"
- "He made love to me ..."
Ginger Rogers in *Top Hat* (1935)
- "Silly art thou, holy virgin Mary" (~1400)
- "He was a good dog"

12

Other examples (from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*)

What does it mean to “dress modestly” in the Bible?

Why were Miriam and Aaron upset about Moses having married a Cushite women?

A culture often shows what it values by its words. Example:

America	Indonesia
“rice” when it is in the field, harvested, on trucks, on our plates – it is just “rice”.	fields of <i>padi</i> , bags of <i>beras</i> and plates of <i>nasi</i> .
<i>Pigs</i> in a barn, slaughtered we have <i>pork</i> , on the plate we have <i>chops, loin, ribs, roast, bacon, and sausage</i>	There is only one word for “pig”

13

Other examples (from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*)

There is not a one-to-one relationship between languages

Several Eastern languages have no word for “privacy” or “private”. In these culture they rarely experience it.

If somebody found themselves in a private location and they needed to describe it (remember they have no word for private), they might say he is in a “place where he feels lonely”

This is why many Hebrew/Greek words are translated a variety of ways – there may be no English equivalent or the word or perhaps even the concept.

Another example is the word “shame” or “snow”

14

Another example from Paul

Paul struggles for a Greek word to describe the fruit (singular) of the Spirit.

He describes it as a “love-joy-peace-patience-kindness-goodness-faithfulness-gentleness-self-control kind of fruit” (Gal 5:22).

Paul is not giving us a list of various fruits, from which we may pick a few. Rather, he gives us a list of words that circle around the one character of a Spirit-filled life he is trying to describe.

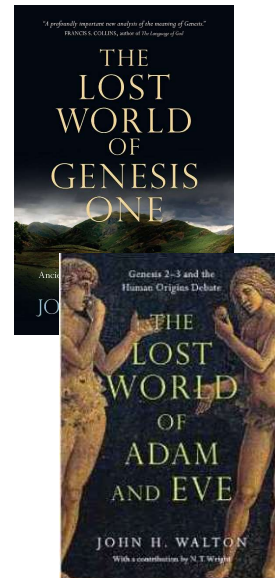
15

The purpose my previous class was to give an alternative to the interpretations mentioned earlier

We must focus on what the original audience would have understood

A “face value” reading does 5 things:

1. Recognizes Genesis as the ancient document it is (it was written for us, but not to us)
2. Finds no reason to impose a material ontology on the text
3. Finds no reason to require the finding of scientific information between the lines
4. Avoids reducing Genesis to merely literary or theological expression
5. Poses no conflict with scientific thinking to the extent it recognizes that the text does not offer scientific explanations.



16

How do you think the people living in the ancient Near East viewed the world differently than we do?

How could we learn what the ancient Near East was like?

Any given ancient Near Eastern culture was more similar to other ancient Near Eastern cultures than any of them are to Western culture.

Remember when this was written and by whom.

17

One way to think of this is as a cultural river

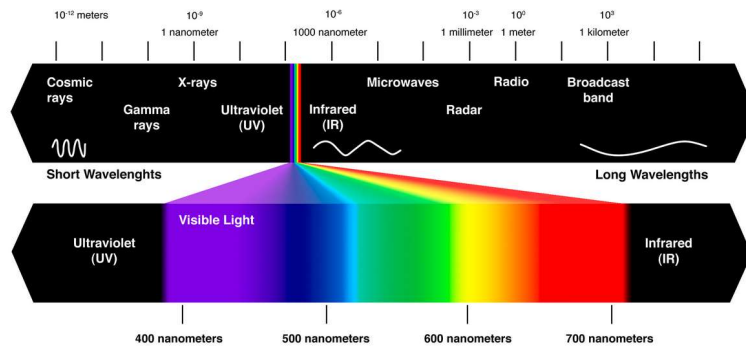


Some of these are unique to the USA

18

What did God create on the first day?

Is “light” electromagnetic radiation in the visible spectrum?



Photons are the quanta for light, so does light mean “photons”?

The “glue” that binds electrons to a nucleus consists of photons!

Read Genesis 1:2 What did God “call” the light and the darkness?

19

So God created “day” and “night”



“day” is a period of light

“night” is a period of darkness

The basis for how humans reckoned time!

20

Summary of some key ideas we discussed in Gen 1

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Heading

Genesis 1:2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Starting state

Genesis 1:3-1:21





The "home" story, not the "house" story


Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.


Genesis 2:2 ...on the seventh day he rested from all his work ...

21


Days 1 to 6 establish functions and functionaries


Day 1  Day 4 

Reck  ult of the sky

Day 2  eatures and birds

Day 7 – God rested → A temple text

Day 3  The basis for food

Day 6  Terrestrial creatures

22

Summary of Gen 2 - 3

Genesis 2:3 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

} Heading

Genesis 2:5-6 Now no shrub had yet appeared...but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

} Starting state of nonfunction

Genesis 2:7-3:21

} Adam and Eve as archetypes, priests in sacred space, "the fall"



Dust



Side



"Priestly" roles

Genesis 3:24 God drives the man out of the garden.

Questions