

Genesis 1-2

Different methods of creating

A seventh reason arraigned in support of theistic evolutionary or evolutionary creationist readings of Genesis 1-2 is substantially just a re-hashing of differences between the two chapters that have previously been raised. These are that, in Genesis 1, “God creates as a sovereign monarch giving orders from on high”, merely speaking so that things come into existence. In Genesis 2, on the other hand, it is noted that God “creates in a more down-to-earth hands-on fashion”; rather than speaking life into existence. Here, God forms man from a lump of earth, breathes life into the man, plants a garden and builds a woman from part of the man’s side¹.

That this argument is essentially just a re-hashing of previous evidence is illustrated by noting that the headline differences – the portrayal of God as sovereign, or transcendent, in Genesis 1 versus the more down-to-earth hands-on aspect in Genesis 2 – have been addressed in at least four of the previous essays².

The motive seems to be to add weight to the *theistic evolutionary* reading, where there is no substantive additional argument, by classifying this as a separate strand of evidence supporting the *theistic evolutionary* claim. Recall that their argument is that Genesis 1 and 2 are two distinct creation stories that “cannot be harmonized” and “were never intended to be” so that consequently they are not to be read as historical descriptions³.

claiming too much

Before examining again scripture’s purpose in these differences, we should note that too much is made of them by the *theistic evolutionist*.

First, the psalmist sees no tension between the notion of God’s sovereignty and his tactile *formation* of man:

“The LORD looks down from heaven... from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions (*ysr*, rendered “formed” in Ge 2:7) the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds” (Ps 33:13-15)

Since the psalmist clearly handles these two concepts harmoniously, why should we read disharmony into Genesis 1 and 2? Second, in another psalm, the holy spirit in David (He 3:7; 4:7) uses the tactile language of *forming* from Genesis 2 to speak of God’s acts in Genesis 1:

“The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land” (Ps 95:5; cf Ge 1:9-10)⁴

Thus, from God’s perspective, revealed through the holy spirit in David, the more down-to-earth hands-on fashion of creation portrayed in Genesis 2 is historically true also of Genesis 1. Seeing these features in Psalms highlights that the literary differences between Genesis 1 and 2 ought not to be read as historical conflict but as purposeful scripture by which God teaches mankind.

Furthermore, whereas the *theistic evolutionist* rightly notes that Genesis 1 has God speaking things into existence while Genesis 2 has him creating in a more hands-on fashion, he

¹ <http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/israels-two-creation-stories-part-3> [cited April 27, 2016].

² Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: the duration of creation; different literary styles; different views of God; God’s names*.

³ <http://biologos.org/blog/series/israels-two-creation-stories> [referenced March 9, 2015].

⁴ We see the same kind of point being made in Isaiah 45:18 where *the creator of the heavens* is said to have “formed (*ysr*) the earth” (cf Ge 1:1,10).

overlooks the fact that the Lord God is also seen *speaking* in Genesis 2. And this, as do other aspects we have already seen, strikes some harmonious correspondence between Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 2, the Lord God *speaks* to give commandments to man (Ge 2:16-17), to describe the incompleteness of creation without the woman for man (Ge 2:18) and, we later learn unequivocally from the Lord Jesus, to initiate marriage between man and the woman (Ge 2:24; cf Mt 19:5-6). Indeed, we later read that Adam and Eve “heard the sound (*qwl*, i.e. “voice”) of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Ge 3:8). That Adam and Eve recognised this *voice* shows that Adam, at least, was accustomed to hearing the Lord God *speaking* prior to their sin without experiencing the *fear* he subsequently felt (Ge 3:10).

This resonates with the conclusion earlier reached that the two literary styles of Genesis 1 and 2 reinforce they are one story about *God speaking* to create *heavens and earth* that will be filled with his glory and that God would continue *to speak* throughout history to fulfil his purpose in man⁵. We will examine later how this theme is developed by considering why Genesis 2 has the Lord God *speaking* to instruct man in his ways as against Genesis 1 having God *speaking* to bring him into existence.

tactile involvement

The tactile *forming* and *breathing* in Adam’s Genesis 2 creation set the scene for how the Lord God will continue to work with man so that his *image* and *likeness* would be seen in him. Likewise the language of *planting* and *building*. This is seen from the way these acts of the Lord God are taken up in other scriptures.

The language of Adam’s *formation* is employed in other places to describe the Lord’s work with man at both national and individual levels. For example:

“the people whom I formed (*ysr*) for myself that they might declare my praise” (Is 43:21; see also Is 44:2,21)

“the LORD says, he who formed (*ysr*) me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him” (Is 49:5; see also Je 1:5)

In the first of these examples we witness the Lord’s testimony that he had *formed his people* at the national level, notably that they might *declare his praise* – an aspect of *God’s image and likeness* being manifest in this *people*. In the second example, the Lord speaks of the *formation of his servant*, historically Hezekiah, prophetically the Lord Jesus Christ and subsequently, because of his apostleship to the gentiles, Paul. Through each of these the Lord redeems his people. Isaiah’s description of this one *being honoured by the Lord* and that *God is his strength* (Is 49:5) further resonates with *God’s image and likeness* being seen in each of them.

The same approach with the tactile language for God’s acts of creation in Genesis 2 yields similar conclusions:

- The act of *planting* can be seen to be figurative of the way the Lord God works with man in tending to their needs, especially our spiritual nurturing; indeed, many times, the Lord’s people metaphorically become the actual *garden* itself⁶.
- *Building* as a metaphor for the establishment of *the Lord God’s* people as his dwelling place is so commonplace in scripture it hardly needs stating⁷. The metaphorical use of *to build* for the making of Eve out of Adam’s rib (Ge 2:22; “he made” is the Hebrew *bnh*, “to build”) is part of scripture’s richly textured meaning in which *the woman* as a metaphor for the Lord’s bride (Ep 5:31-32) is simultaneously presented as *the house* for *God’s glory*.

⁵ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: different literary styles*.

⁶ See Exodus 15:17; 2 Samuel 7:10; 1 Chronicles 17:9; Psalms 44:2; 80:8,15; Isaiah 5:2; 51:16; Jeremiah 1:10; 2:21; 11:17; 18:9; 24:6; 31:28; 32:41; 42:10; 45:4; Ezekiel 36:36; Amos 9:15; Romans 6:5; James 1:21; Matthew 15:13; 21:33; Mark 12:1; Luke 13:6; 20:9; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7,8; 9:7.

⁷ But see, for example: 2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chronicles 17:10; Psalms 78:69; 102:16; 127:1; 147:2; Jeremiah 24:6; 31:4,28; 33:7; Amos 9:11; Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 2:5.

The description of the Lord God enlivening the body *formed of dust from the ground by breathing* into it is likewise taken up in other scriptures to describe *the Lord God's* active involvement in his creation to develop *his image and likeness* in man. A key apostolic scripture portrays this while also furthering our understanding of the ongoing role of *God speaking* to instruct man in his ways as we have already noted is a feature of Genesis 2.

God-breathed

The apostle Paul writes:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped (*exartizō*) for every good work” (2 Ti 3:16-17)

The use of Genesis 2:7 in “breathed out by God” is unmistakable and this use is reinforced by its association with a new Adam, *the man of God*. Just as the *formation of Adam* (Ge 2:7) was accomplished by *God speaking* (Ge 1:26), so also the *new man in Christ* is made *competent for every good work* by *God's breathed scripture*.

This function of scripture, of God's word, to transform man into a *man of God*, manifesting God's *image and likeness*, is made clear as early as Genesis 2 when God continues *to speak* to instruct man in his ways. The different portrayals in Genesis 1 and 2 we have been considering make evident this teaching.

the book of truth

In order that *scripture* is able to accomplish such things then it must of necessity be intrinsically competent since “a diseased tree” cannot “bear good fruit” (Mt 7:18) neither “can a salt pond yield fresh water” (Jas 3:12).

Indeed, in another place where the *equipping* (*katartismos*) of *the saints* and the achievement of “mature manhood” is described by taking up the metaphor of Eve's being *built*, the apostle Paul says of our “work of ministry” that we are to *practice the truth* (*alētheuō*) (Ep 4:12-16, ESV & NET). In order that *God-breathed scripture* can accomplish such a thing it likewise must be true – as scripture claims about itself (Ps 19:7-9; Pr 30:5).

It is clear that very many Hebrew and apostolic scriptures refer to Genesis 1-2 as historically true and employ its truth in spiritual instruction. We cannot play fast and loose with its historical truth, in order to accommodate other matters external to scripture, without losing the truth of its spiritual instruction. Yet reading disharmony into Genesis 1 and 2 and claiming that we ought not consequently to handle these chapters as historical perpetrates exactly that.