

RATIO CHRISTI

Welcome to Ratio Christi

at Texas A&M



Welcome!

Ratio Christi, meaning “reason for Christ” in Latin, serves to defend the Christian faith in honest dialogue with both our skeptical & believing friends.

Weekly Meetings: Thursday @ 7:30pm

in person + via ZOOM

RC-TAMU.org



RATIO CHRISTI

Fall 2020: Confronting Old Testament Controversy

How well do you know your Old Testament?

This fall Ratio Christi at Texas A&M is *Confronting Old Testament Controversy*.

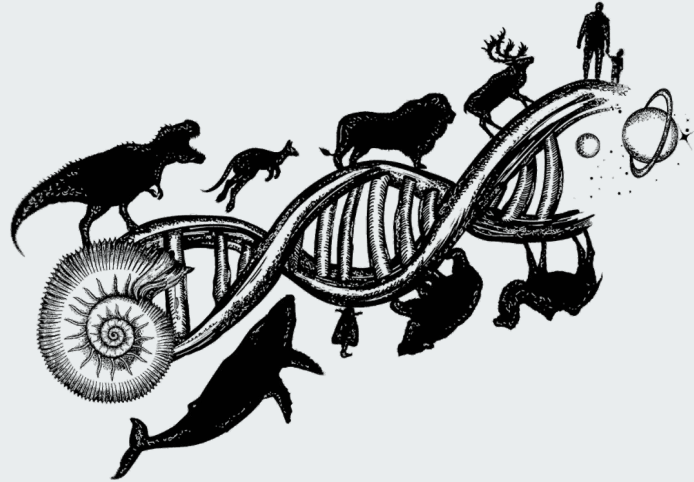
Despite being the majority of the Bible, the Old Testament remains a difficult and sometime perplexing group of writings. With ancient laws, long histories, and confusing prophecies, we are often left wondering... ***what do we do with the Old Testament?*** Each week we will look at the toughest questions surrounding the Hebrew Bible:

- Is the God of the Old Testament evil?
- Did the Exodus really happen? If so, when?
- Were the Israelites polytheists?
- Did Moses write the Torah?

Join us each **Thursday at 7:30pm** to learn a little bit more about the old testament.

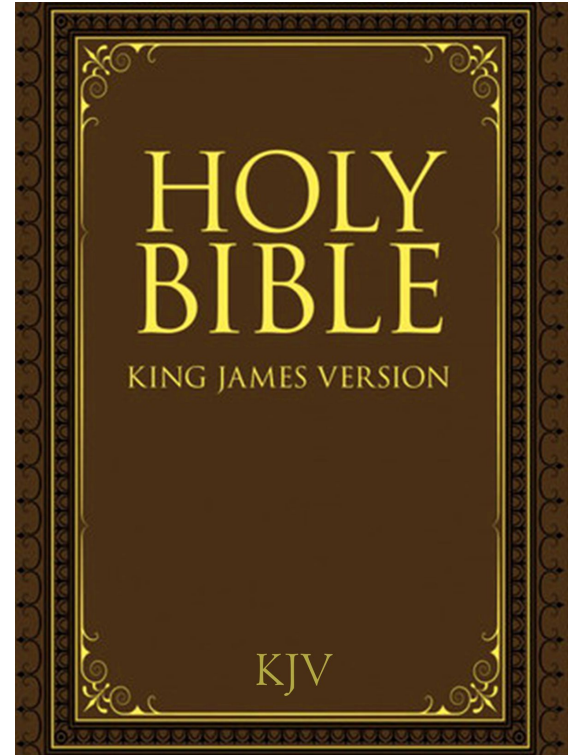
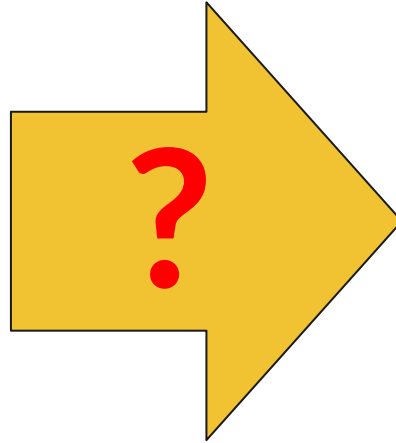
How should we read Genesis 1-11?

2000+ years of disagreement



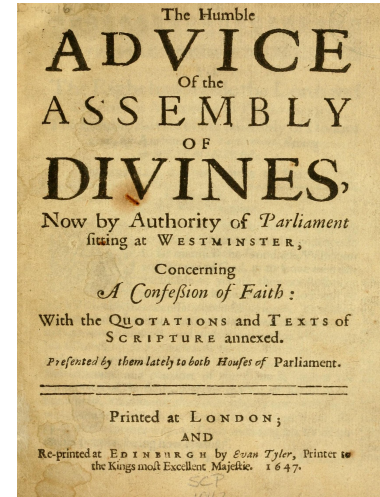
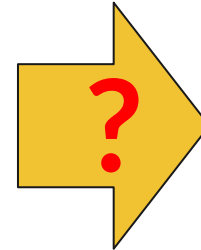
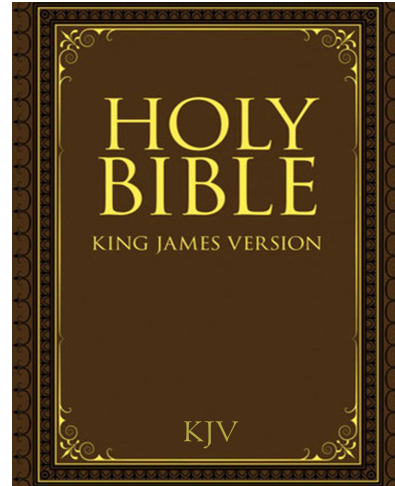
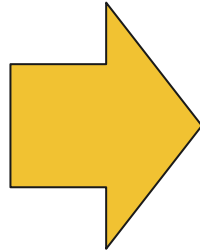
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GOD



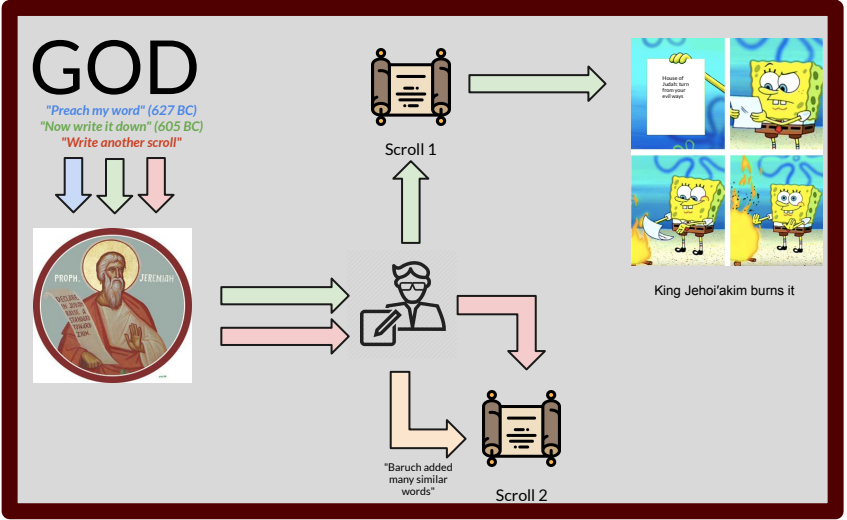
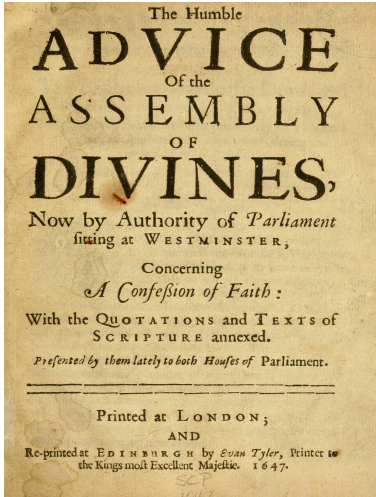
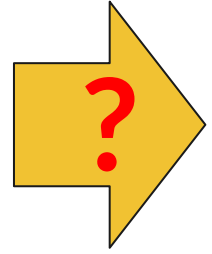
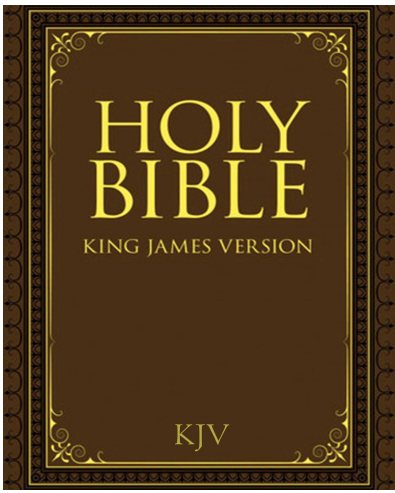
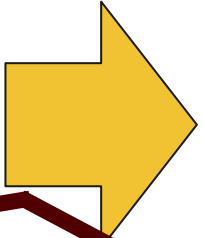
What Does the Bible Teach?

GOD



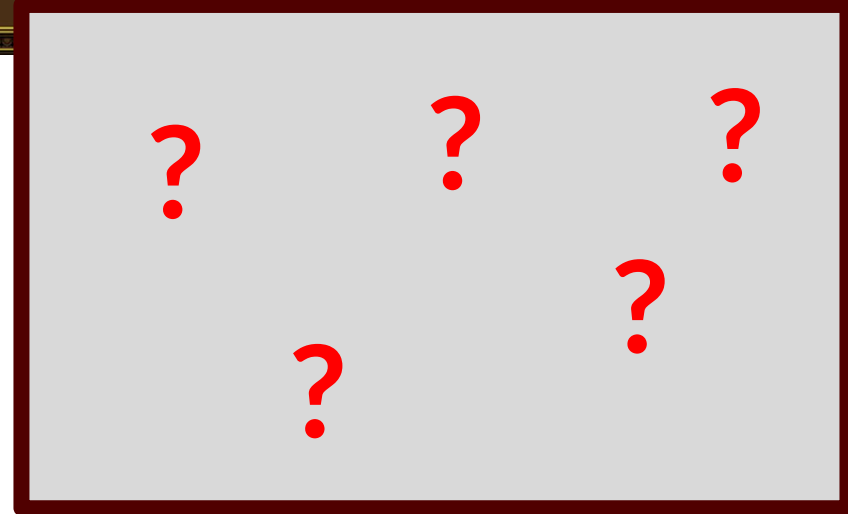
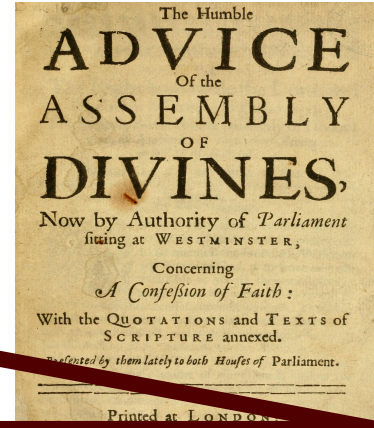
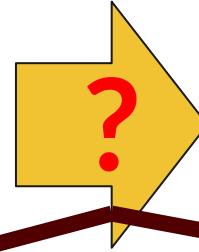
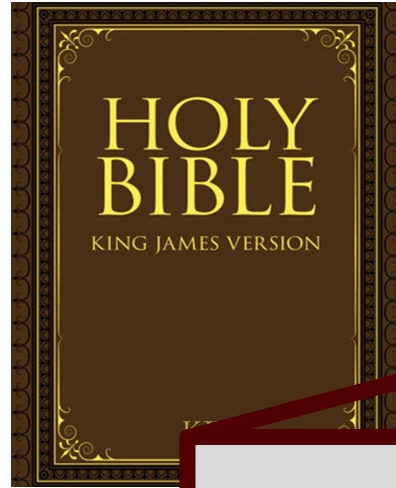
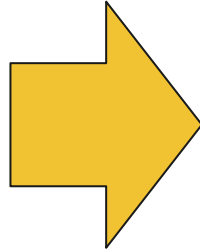
What Does the Bible Teach?

GOD



What Does the Bible Teach?

GOD



READING GENESIS WELL

*Navigating History, Poetry,
Science, and Truth in Genesis 1-11*

C. JOHN COLLINS

Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1-11

What does it mean to be a good reader of Genesis 1-11? What does it mean to take these ancient stories seriously and how does that relate to taking them literally? Can we even take any of this material seriously?

Reading Genesis Well answers these questions and more, promoting a responsible conversation about how science and biblical faith relate by developing a rigorous approach to interpreting the Bible, especially those texts that come into play in science and faith discussions. This unique approach connects the ancient writings of Genesis 1-11 with modern science in an honest and informed way.

Old Testament scholar C. John Collins appropriates literary and linguistic insights from C. S. Lewis and builds on them using ideas from modern linguistics, such as lexical semantics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics. This study helps readers to evaluate to what extent it is proper to say that the Bible writers held a "primitive" picture of the world, and what function their portrayal of the world and its contents had in shaping the community.



C. John Collins is Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Collins served as Old Testament chair on the translation committee for the English Standard Version of the Bible, and Old Testament Editor for the ESV Study Bible. He has written extensively on biblical languages and interpretation, and on science and the Christian faith, including:

- *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care*
- *The God of Miracles: An Exegetical Examination of God's Action in the World*
- *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?*
- *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*

What is our starting point?

- We are addressing this question from a Christian perspective and with Christian presuppositions
- Including:
 - Biblical Inspiration
 - Biblical Inerrancy

What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?

“**Inspiration:** The process by which God worked through the human authors of the Bible... and refers to God as the ultimate source of the Scriptures.”

“**Organic inspiration:** The process by which God guided the human authors of Scripture, working in and through their particular styles and life experiences, so that what they produced was exactly what He wanted them to produce. **The text is truly the work of the human authors**—God did not typically dictate to them as to a stenographer—and yet the Lord stands behind it as the ultimate source.”



R.C. Sproul

-Ligonier Ministries

NOTE: Islamic inspiration is based on a “dictation” model, Christianity has historically not taken this view

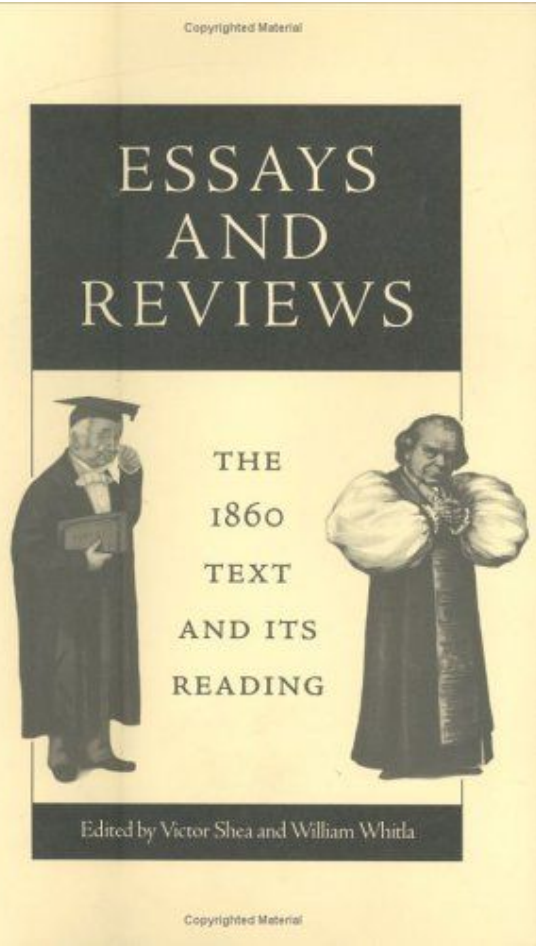
Reminder: Inerrancy

Inerrancy:

- Being wholly and verbally God-given, **Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching**, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
- We affirm that **God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers** whom He had chosen and prepared.
- We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Essays and Reviews, 1860

- A famously controversial publication
- A series of essays promoting “critical” approaches to the Bible
 - Denied predictive prophecy in the Old Testament
 - Denied the possibility of miracles
 - A critique of attempted harmonies between Genesis and geological science
 - A plea to treat the Bible like any other piece of literature

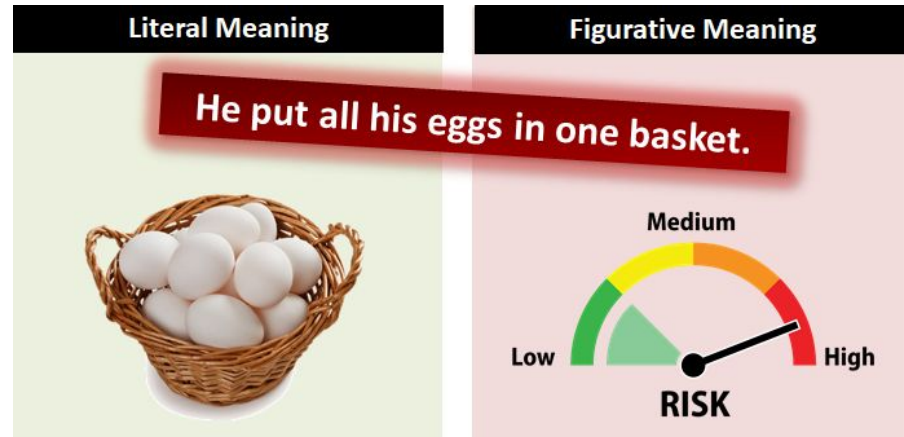


Essays and Reviews, 1860: 19th Century Literalism

- The correct way to read the Bible is to
 - Consider the *plain meaning of the text*
 - Remove all interpretation

The Hebrew records, the basis of religious faith, manifestly countenanced the opinion of the earth's immobility and certain other views of the universe very incompatible with those propounded by Copernicus.

It can scarcely be said that this chapter [Gen 1] is not intended in part to teach and convey at least some physical truth, and taking its words in their plain sense it manifestly gives a view of the universe adverse to that of modern science.



Responses to *Essays and Review*

- Traditional (conservative) Christians responded in two ways
 1. Reject science, develop replacement theories
 - i.e. creation science
 2. Concordism, accepting some part of the scientific theory.
 - More common
 - Appealed to “phenomenal language” or the language of appearance
 - Also sought to demonstrate correspondence with science
 - That science is now out of date!
- Among BOTH groups, some accepted the literalism of their critics



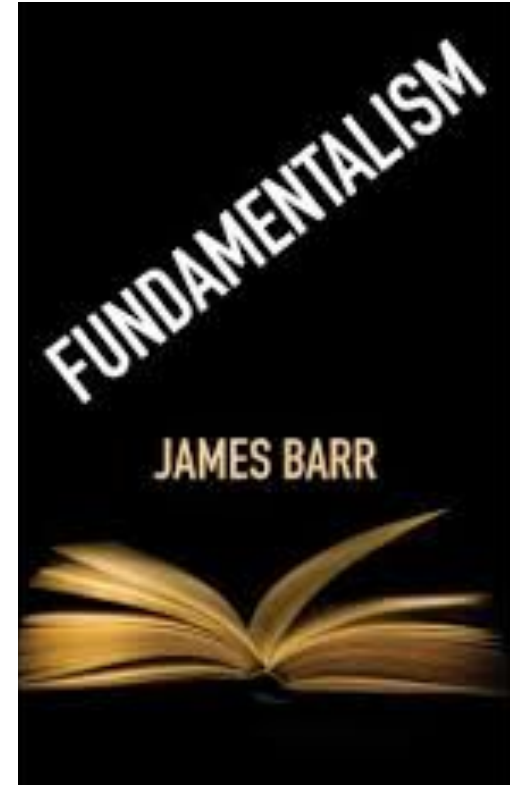
Literalism in Scholarship Today: James Barr (died 2006)

- “Fundamentalists” are not literal enough
- They are selective in their application of literality:

“Theological statements of scripture about God, if all taken literally, lead to mutual contradictions, which are usually overcome by abandoning the literal level of interpretation.” Further, ““Literality should properly require that, just as nothing that is there in words should be ignored, so nothing that is not there in words should be allowed.”

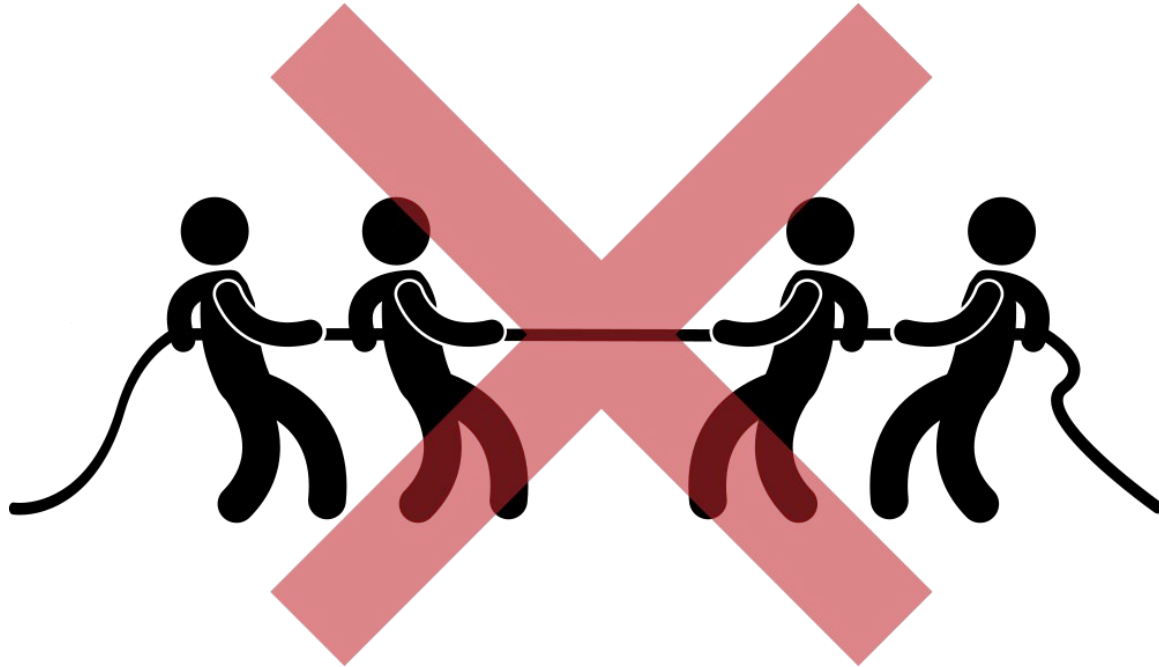
- Contemporary evangelical scholars still follow Barr

*“These evangelical scholars, I think, agree with a theme that runs through Barr’s work, namely, **that anything other than a straightforward literalism is a less-than-fully-honest way of reading the ancient text.** Most curiously, many young-earth creationists find Barr’s advocacy of literalism (in his book *Fundamentalism*) quite appealing, and they cite it with approval—Barr gives them the chance to claim that they are the honest traditionalists (as over against those who are untroubled about the age of the earth).”*



If the Bible *isn't* literal,
it *can't* be true!

If the Bible *is* literal, it
isn't true!



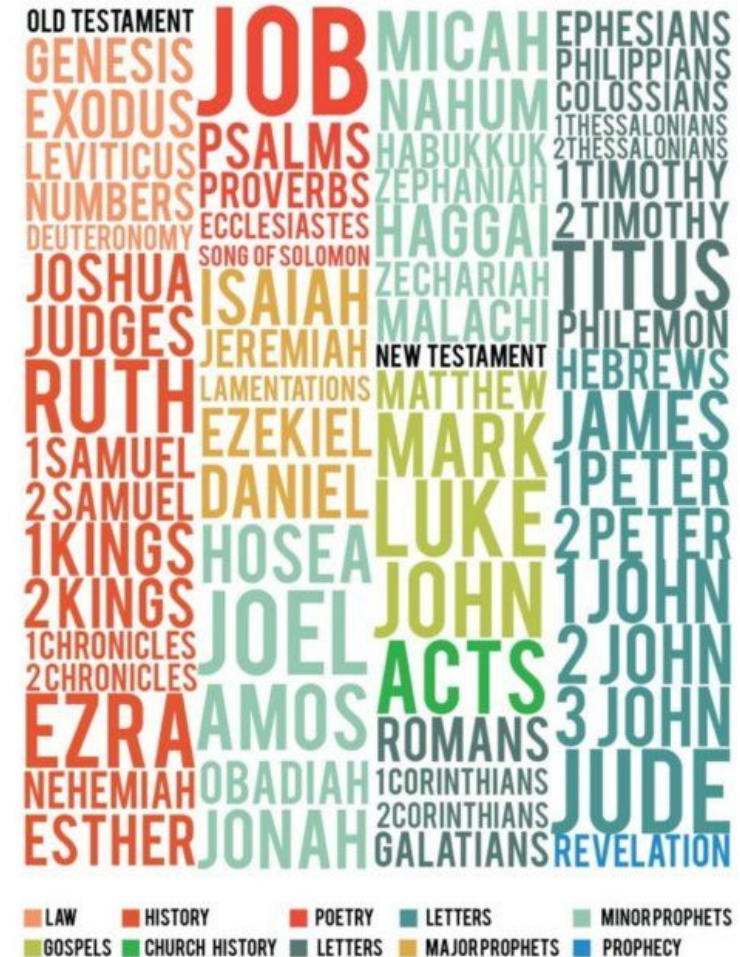
What Comes Next?

Biblical Interpretation is *Hermeneutics*

Definition:

- The science of interpreting a text, particularly Scripture

Discovering the *MEANING*



Three Choices

The Reader
subjectivism



The Author

The Text
word study trap

“The idea that any man or writer should be opaque to those who lived in the same culture, spoke the same language, shared the same habitual imagery and unconscious assumptions, and yet be transparent to those who have none of these advantages, is in my opinion preposterous.”



C.S. Lewis

COOPERATION!

Just like any other human activity involving two parties, cooperation of the reader is required for the author to effectively convey his meaning

An **uncooperative** reader fails to meet the author where he is, and consequently will not understand the author's meaning.

A lack of cooperation in communication can result in a **JOKE!**

*“There is a knock at the door and a man tells his robot, “**Robot, go answer the door.**” And the robot dutifully approaches the door and said, “**Yes, door, what was it that you asked?**”*



Locution

The actual form of words
spoken

Focusing only on the locution
results in misunderstandings.



Illocution

The intended effect of those
words (on beliefs, actions,
attitudes)

What Does a Piece of Literature Mean?

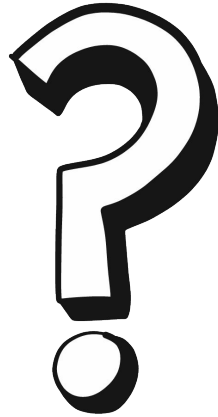
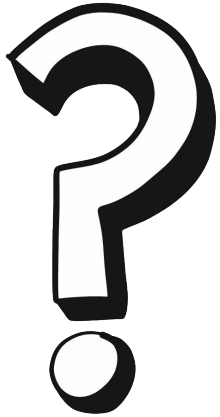
“The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is—what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used.”

~C.S. Lewis

What it is

What it Does

How it is Used



What is it?

- Literary form
- Genre
- Style
- Register

What is it intended to do?

- What effect is intended on the audience?

How is it meant to be used?

- What kind of audience is envisioned?
- What knowledge and beliefs do they share with the author?
- What is the social setting of intended use?

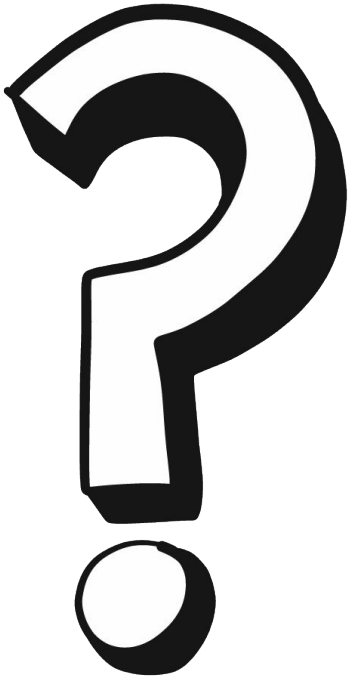


Steps to Understand a Text

What is it?

What does it do?

How is it used?



Ways to classify Texts

There are a number of different ways to classify texts:

Literary form

- The organization, arrangement, or framework of a literary work; the manner or style of constructing, arranging, and coordinating the parts of a composition for a pleasing or effective result.

Genre

- A social and communicative act, with its associated linguistic, rhetorical, and literary conventions and expectations.

Register

- A publicly recognized cluster of linguistic features (e.g., pronunciation, specific words, syntactic constructions, morphology, intonation patterns, sometimes also gestures) associated with particular cultural practices and types of people who engage in them (e.g., radio announcers, waiters, medical doctors, school teachers, street vendors, flight attendants).

Style

- The material articulation, in whatever genre and form, of an author's attempt to record their vision, sensibility, and apperception of the world...No style is solely the product of a given author, but a conversation with and response to a vast network of styles that preceded, parallel and follow that of the author.

Language Type

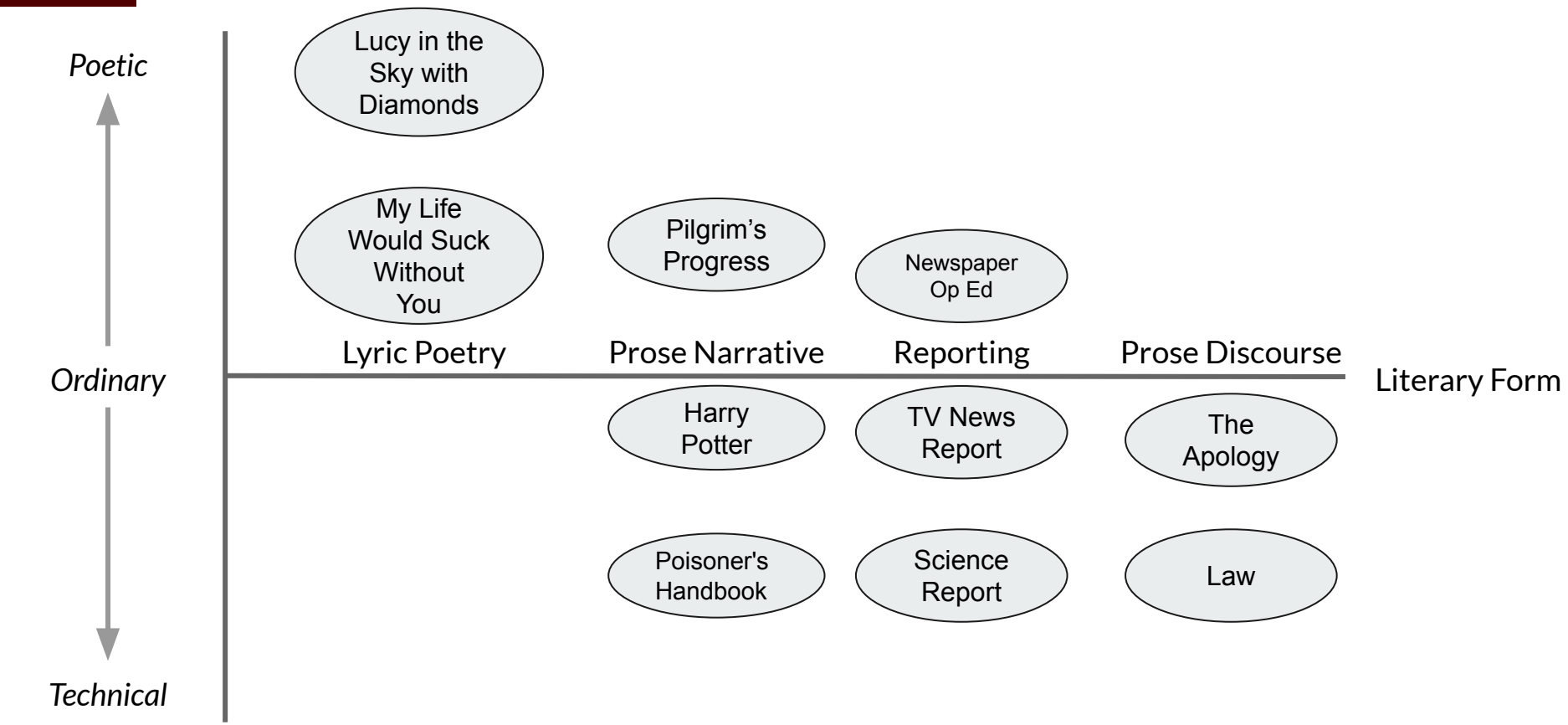
- Language can be ordinary, technical, or poetic



Sources:

- Collins, C. John. Reading Genesis Well (p. 48). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.
- Collins, C. John. Reading Genesis Well (p. 48). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.
- Alessandro Duranti, "Linguistic Anthropology," in The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics, ed. Rajend Mesthrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28–46, quote on p. 42.
- John Keene, <https://lithub.com/john-keene-elements-of-literary-style/>

Literary Form vs. Language Type



Language Type

So How Can We Understand What a Text IS?

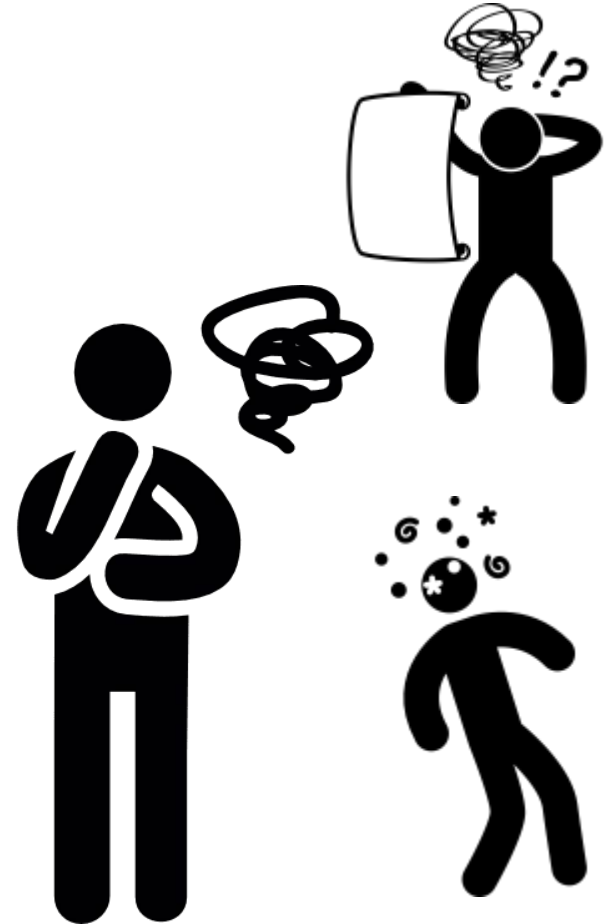
Genre!!

- Genre is a grouping of texts that all have similar:
 - Structure
 - Language
 - Purpose
 - Audience
- Genre is an important part of the shared understanding between author and audience

Genre ≠ literary form ≠ style ≠ register ≠ language

Genre: A social and communicative act, with its associated linguistic, rhetorical, and literary conventions and expectations.

Collins, C. John. Reading Genesis Well (p. 48). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.



GENRE *EXAMPLE*

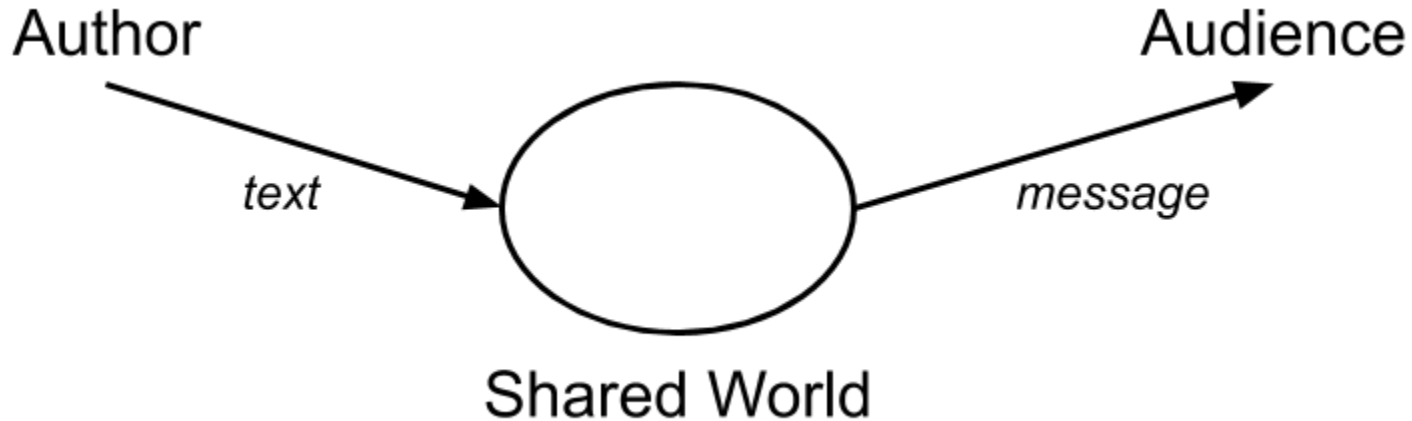


From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera. – Judges 5:20

- What is going on here? An interstellar battle?
- The surrounding verses clarify the genre here is Jewish poetic-structural narrative or perhaps Jewish apocalyptic language
- Judges 4 provides historical narrative of the same battle

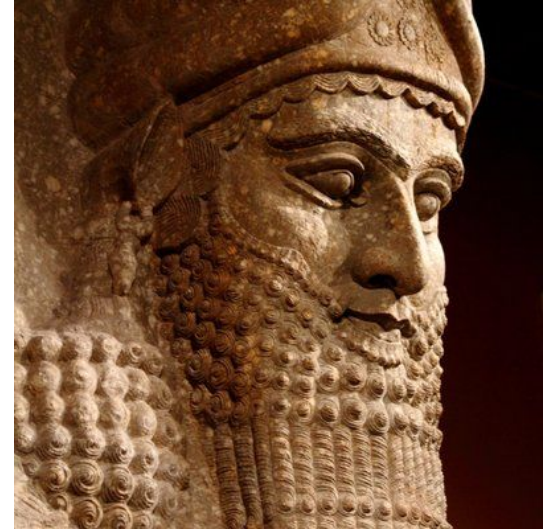


- Authors rely on a shared world picture to communicate
 - Knowledge, belief, values, experiences, language, literary conventions
 - The Author **DOES NOT REPEAT** what is included in the world picture
 - **We have to reconstruct the shared world of the author and audience to understand the text!**



We will look at three examples from Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature:

- Eridu Genesis
- The Atrahasis Epic
- The Sumerian King Lists



We will ask several questions:

1. How does Genesis compare to the literature from the ANE?
2. How did ANE people understand their literature?

Exploring the Shared World

Sumerian King List	Atrahasis Epic	Eridu Genesis	Genesis 1–11
1. Creation assumed; kingship came down from heaven	1. Creation assumed, gods create humans to do their work	1. Creation; cities are instituted	1. Creation (Gen 1–2)
2. Series of eight kings in five cities	2. Noisy humans alienate deities	2. [Alienation]	2. Alienation (Gen 3), genealogies (Gen 4–5)
3. The flood	3. The flood; ark	3. The flood; ark	3. The flood; ark (Gen 6–9)
4. Kingship again; dynasties follow, leading to— 5. “Modern times”	4. New start (5. “Modern times,” implied)	4. New start (5. “Modern times,” implied)	4. New start; then genealogies, down to— 5. “Modern times”

Eridu Genesis

Creation of Man:

When An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursaga fashioned the dark-headed people, they had made the small animals that came up from out of the earth come from the earth in abundance and had let there be, as befits it, gazelles, wild donkeys, and four-footed beasts in the desert.

Judgement and the Flood:

And as Ziusudra stood there beside it, he went on hearing: "Step up to the wall to my left and listen! Let me speak a word to you at the wall and may you grasp what I say, may you heed my advice! **By our hand a flood will sweep over the cities of the half-bushel baskets, and the country; the decision, that mankind is to be destroyed, has been made.** A verdict, a command of the assembly, can not be revoked... All the evil winds, all stormy winds gathered into one and with them, them, **the Flood was sweeping over the cities of the half-bushel baskets, for seven days and seven nights.** After the flood had swept over the country, after the evil wind had tossed the **big boat** about on the great waters, the sun came out spreading light over heaven and earth.

<https://www.livius.org/sources/content/oriental-varia/eridu-genesis/>

"The Ancient Near East: Volume 1, an anthology of texts and pictures." James B. Pritchard. 1958. Princeton University Press.



Creation of Man:

When the gods were man they did forced labor, they bore drudgery. Great indeed was the drudgery of the gods, the forced labor was heavy, the misery too much: the seven great Anunna-gods were burdening the Igigi-gods with forced labor. [Lacuna] The gods were digging watercourses, canals they opened, the life of the land. The Igigi-gods were digging watercourses canals they opened, the life of the land. The Igigi-gods dug the Tigris river and the Euphrates thereafter. Springs they opened from the depths, wells ... they established... They heaped up all the mountains. [Several lines missing]... years of drudgery... the vast marsh.

They counted years of drudgery, ... and forty years, too much! ... forced labor they bore night and day. They were complaining, denouncing, muttering down in the ditch: "Let us face up to our foreman the prefect, he must take off our heavy burden upon us! Enlil, counsellor of the gods, the warrior, come, let us remove him from his dwelling...

They slaughtered Aw-ilu [a god], who had the inspiration, in their assembly. Nintu mixed clay with his flesh and blood... From the flesh of the god the spirit remained. It would make the living know its sign. Lest he be allowed to be forgotten, the spirit remained. After she had mixed the clay, she summoned the Anunna, the great gods. The Igigi, the great gods, spat upon the clay. Mami made ready to speak, and said to the great gods: "You ordered me the task and I have completed it! You have slaughtered the god, along with his inspiration. I have done away with your heavy forced labor, I have imposed your drudgery on man. You have bestowed clamor upon mankind. I have released the yoke, I have made restoration."

Judgement and the Flood:

Atrahasis made ready to speak, and said to his lord: "Make me know the meaning of the dream. let me know, that I may look out for its consequence." Enki made ready to speak, and said to his servant: "...**Flee the house, build a boat, forsake possessions, and save life. The boat which you build... be equal ... Roof her over like the depth, so that the sun shall not see inside her. Let her be roofed over fore and aft. The gear should be very strong, the pitch should be firm, and so give the boat strength.** I will shower down upon you later a windfall of birds, a spate of fishes." **He opened the water clock and filled it, he told it of the coming of the seven-day deluge...**

The Elders ... The carpenter carried his axe, the reedworker carried his stone, the rich man carried the pitch, the poor man brought the materials needed. whatever he had ... Whatever he had ... **Pure animals he slaughtered, cattle ... Fat animals he killed. Sheep ... he choose and and brought on board. The birds flying in the heavens, the cattle and the ... of the cattle god, the creatures of the steppe, ... he brought on board... he invited his people... to a feast... his family was brought on board...**

The outlook of the weather changed. Adad began to roar in the clouds. The god they heard, his clamor. He brought pitch to seal his door. By the time he had bolted his door, Adad was roaring in the clouds. The winds were furious as he set forth, He cut the mooring rope and released the boat. the storm... were yoked Anzu rent the sky with his talons, He ... the land and broke its clamor like a pot... the flood came forth. Its power came upon the peoples like a battle, one person did not see another, they could not recognize each other in the catastrophe. The deluge bellowed like a bull, The wind resounded like a screaming eagle. The darkness was dense, the sun was gone,... like flies... the clamor of the deluge.

Limits on life and population:

Enki made ready to speak and said to Nintu the birth goddess: "You, birth goddess, creatress of destinies, establish death for all peoples! "Now then, let there be a third woman among the people, among the people are the woman who has borne and the woman who has not borne. Let there be also among the people the pasittu (she-demon): Let her snatch the baby from the lap who bore it. And establish high priestesses and priestesses, let them be taboo,note and so cut down childbirth."

NOTE: "Scholars now agree that damaged text near the end of the Epic refers to the gods' decision to institute death as a normal end to human life; the restoration is supported by a newly discovered piece of Sumerian text. This late decision rectified the mistake the gods made in the initial creation of man."

Collins, C. John. Reading Genesis Well (p. 118). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

Robert Longacre, "The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative," in Society of Biblical Literature 1976 Seminar Papers, ed. G. MacRae (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 235–62. See also Robert Longacre, "Interpreting Biblical Stories," in Discourse and Literature, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1985), 169–85.

“The story opens at the time “when the gods instead of man did the work, bore the loads”; because the work was too hard, “the great Anunnaki,” the (senior) gods, made the Igigi, a group of “junior” gods, to do the work (such as digging canals). When the Igigi objected to the work and went on strike, the gods decided not to destroy them for rebellion but instead to decree the formation of humankind who would then do the hard work. The gods slew one of their number and mixed his blood and flesh with clay and their spittle to make humankind in seven couples (without setting a limit on their life spans). Unfortunately, humankind was a noisy lot whose population grew and spread, which disturbed the gods’ rest and tranquility. The gods sent plague and famine to control the population and finally resorted to a great flood. Certain of the gods secretly spared Atrahasis, who made a special boat and saved animals and some people (the text is damaged, so the details are uncertain).”

Collins, C. John. Reading Genesis Well (p. 118). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

The Sumerian King List (Late 3rd millennium BCE)

After the kingship descended from heaven, the kingship was in Eridu.
In Eridu, Alulim became king; he ruled for 28,800 years.
Alalgar ruled for 36,000 years.
Two kings; they ruled for 64,800 years.

Then Eridu fell and the kingship was taken to Bad-tibira.
In Bad-tibira, Enmen-lu-ana ruled for 43,200 years.
Enmen-gal-ana ruled for 28,800 years.
The divine Dumuzi, the shepherd, ruled for 36,000 years.
Three kings; they ruled for 108,000 years.

Then Bad-tibira fell and the kingship was taken to Larak.
In Larak, En-sipad-zid-ana ruled for 28,800 years.
One king; he ruled for 28,800 years.

Then Larak fell and the kingship was taken to Sippar.
In Sippar, Enmen-dur-ana became king; he ruled for 21,000 years.
One king; he ruled for 21,000 years.

Then Sippar fell and the kingship was taken to Šuruppak.
In Šuruppak, Ubara-Tutu became king; he ruled for 18,600 years.
One king; he ruled for 18,600 years.

Five cities; eight kings ruled for 385,200 [sic] years.
Then the Flood swept over.

After the Flood had swept over, and the kingship had descended from heaven, the kingship was in Kiš.

In Kiš, Gišur became king; he ruled for 1,200 years.

Kullassina-bêl ruled for 900 years.

Nan-GiŠ-lišma ruled for 1,200 years.

En-dara-ana ruled for 420 years, 3 months, and 3½ days.

Babum ruled for 300 years.

Pu'annum ruled for 840 years.

Kalibum ruled for 900 years.

Kalumum ruled for 840 years.

Zuqaqip ruled for 900 years.

Atab ruled for 600 years.

Mašda, son of Atab, ruled for 840 years.

Arwi'um, son of Mašda, ruled for 720 years.

Etana, the shepherd, who ascended to heaven and put all countries in order, became king; he ruled for 1,500 years.

Balih, son of Etana, ruled for 400 years.

Enme-nuna ruled for 660 years.

Melem-Kiš, son of Enme-nuna, ruled for 900 years.

Barsal-nuna, son of Enme-nuna, ruled for 1,200 years.

Samug, son of Barsal-nuna, ruled for 140 years.

Tizkar, son of Samug, ruled for 305 years.

Ilku'u ruled for 900 years.

Ilta-sadum ruled for 1200 years.

Enmen-baragesi, who destroyed Elam's weapons, became king; he ruled for 900 years.

Agga, son of Enmen-baragesi, ruled for 625 years.

Twenty-three kings ruled for 23,310 years, 3 months, and 3 1/2 days.

What do Other Ancient Near Eastern Texts Look Like?

1. Creation
 - a. Enuma Elish
 - b. Atrahasis
2. The Fall
 - a. Gilgamesh loses plant of rejuvenation to serpent
 - b. Aqhat refuses eternal life
3. The Flood
 - a. Atrahasis + Gilgamesh, and Sumerian flood (Eridu Genesis)
 - b. Noah and the Flood
4. Genealogies
 - a. Sumerian King Lists
 - b. Babylonian/Ur



Differences:

1. Lack of gods...
2. Genesis is less fantastic
3. Radically different theology

Similarities:

1. “Fantastic” elements (i.e. talking serpent, cherubim)
2. A similar interest in grounding present realities in the primordial past
3. Similar episodes to those in ANE myths (Flood, molding man out of clay/dirt)
4. Genesis shows a similar interest in tying Mythic elements to *real historic people* using genealogies



IS GENESIS A
MYTH?!?



The folklorist's myth: not a falsehood

We are using a technical term, not the common usage in ordinary language

Myth: Sacred narratives which explain how the world and man came to be in their present form.

Myth is a genre! The author of Genesis is using this genre... but why?

If Genesis is a “myth” what does that say about how it should be interpreted? Is it historical? How did ancient cultures understand their myths?



How did ANE people understand their literature?

- **This is a very difficult question...**
 - We do not have access to ancient peoples to ask them
 - The writings are sparse enough that we don't really have early written interpretations of ANE myths
- We can instead study the way other cultures view their myths
- We can note two nearly universal features of myths:
 - **Flexibility:** The degree of variability over time
 - **Plasticity:** The degree of variability of a myth at one time
- Many cultures have “contradictory” versions of myths which are accepted
 - This suggests, that the contradictory details are not considered essential, but rather the central point of the myth is what is important

But Genealogies!

1. The genealogies transition smoothly from “mythic” narratives
2. The genealogies form an unbroken line to clearly historic figures (e.g. Abram)
3. Even in the ANE myths, the genealogies connect to historical figures
4. There are no clear examples of unhistorical people included in ANE genealogies/king lists

We should amend our genre:

Mytho-History

Mythic elements are woven into a real timeline with presumed historic people. This genre was identified by Thorkild Jacobsen in his study of the Eridu Genesis.

An Expert Opinion: Gordon Wenham

“Gordon Wenham, who is a highly respected Old Testament commentator, is instructive. Wenham is the author of the commentary Genesis 1-15 in The Word biblical commentary series. Of Jacobsen’s classification of Genesis 1-11 as mytho-history, Wenham remarks, **“This is a sensitive analysis of both texts.”** That is to say, both the Eridu Genesis and the biblical Genesis. **“But,”** and here comes the caveat, **“myth is a loaded term which leads to misunderstanding. That is why I prefer *proto-history*.”**

“The narratives put profound theological truths “in vivid and memorable form in an absorbing yet highly symbolic story.” **If we take these stories as straightforward history,** Wenham cautions, **“we may be forced to conclude that Genesis is trying to relate history but not succeeding, which would be a rather negative conclusion.”**”

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity-part-17/>



An Expert Opinion: Bill Arnold

By contrast, Bill Arnold is an evangelical Old Testament scholar at Asbury Seminary in Wilmington, Kentucky. Arnold has more temerity than Wenham. He opines

“These chapters are no simple history or example of ancient historiography. At most, we may say that mythical themes have been arranged in a forward-moving, linear progression, in what may be considered a historicizing literary form, using genealogies especially, to make history out of myth.”

*“The Primeval History (Gen. 1-11) addresses the origins of the universe, the creation of humanity, and the first institutions of human civilization. We retain the term ‘history’ in the title of this first unit of the Bible—the Primeval History—because, on the one hand, it arranges themes along a time continuum using cause and effect and generally uses historical narrative as the literary medium for communication. On the other hand, those themes themselves are the same ones explored elsewhere in the ancient Near East in mythological literature... **The Primeval History narrates those themes in a way that transforms their meaning and import, and for these reasons we may think of these chapters as a unique literary category, which some have termed ‘mytho-historical.’**”*

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity-part-17/>



What is it?

What does it do?

How is it used?

- Genesis has similarities to ANE myths, but also important differences.
- It is mostly narrative
- It also contains genealogies, showing an historical interest
- We may term the genre “Mytho-History” or “Proto-History”



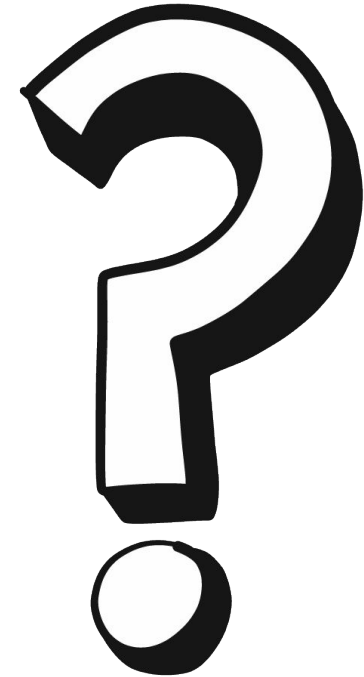
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What does it do?

- Genesis is meant to convey important theological truths
- It grounds the present reality of the Israelites in the primordial past
- It shows that God is the God of the whole world, not just Israel
- Explains evil in the world as the result of a human fall
- Introduces how God is redeeming fallen humans

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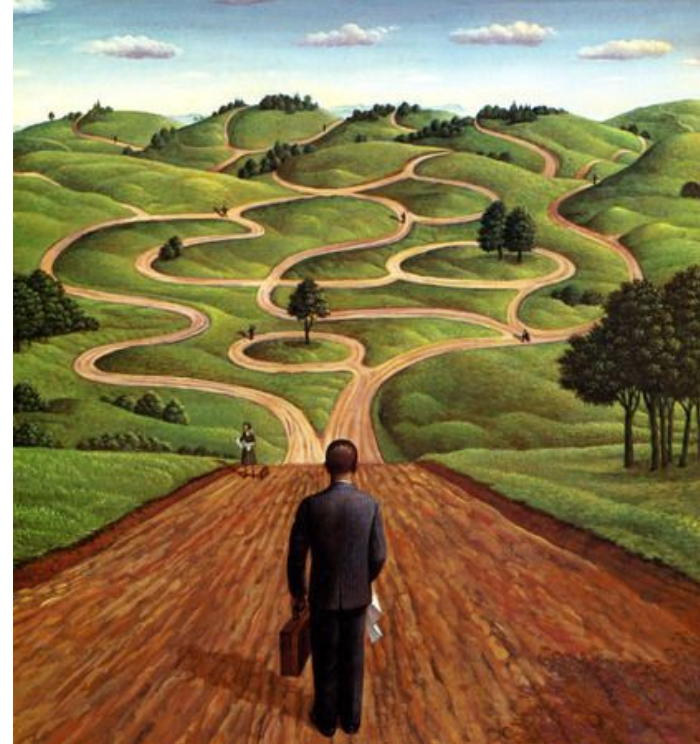
- The Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) as a whole functions as a constitution for Israel.
- It is intended to shape Israel’s (and thus our) view of the world
- Genesis presents the beginning of a single, unbroken story from creation, to the fall, redemption, and judgement.

Application...

*Understanding the Relationship of
Genesis to Contemporary Science*

Genesis 1-11: Genre? Rules of the Road

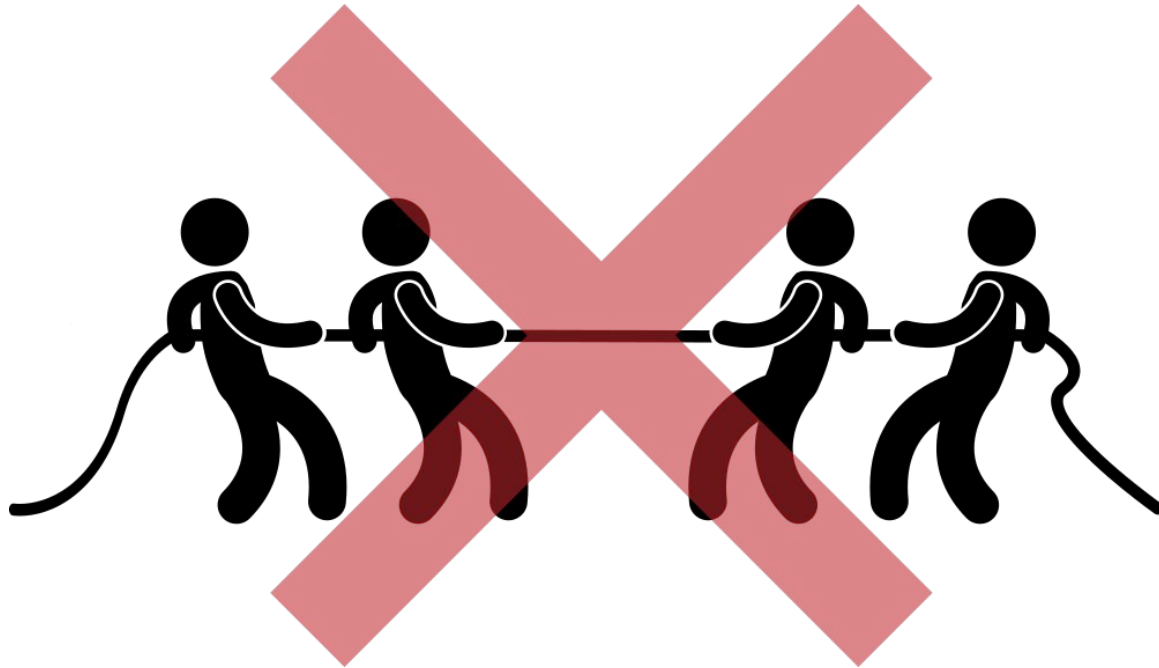
- **Consider Genre:**
 - Texts are written BY people, FOR people
 - Try to determine how the **original author** and **audience** would have understood the text
- **Answer Lewis' Questions:**
 - What is the it? What does it do? How is it used?
- **No concordism!** (Reading science into the text)
 - Ancient authors were not trying to communicate today's science!
 - Reads obsolete science into the text...
- **Seek an integrated faith**



The Tug of War: Which side is right?

If the Bible *isn't* literal,
it *can't* be true!

If the Bible *is* literal, it
isn't true!



Genesis 1-11 as Literalistic History

- Dr. Jonathan Sarfati (PhD in Chemistry)
 - Jonathan Sarfati. *The Genesis Account: A theological, historical, and scientific commentary on Genesis 1-11*, 2015, Creation Book Publishers ISBN 978-1921643910
- I am relying on discussion of Sarfati's work found here

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity/excursus-on-creation-of-life-and-biological-diversity-part-2>

JONATHAN D. SARFATI PH.D., F.M.

THE GENESIS ACCOUNT



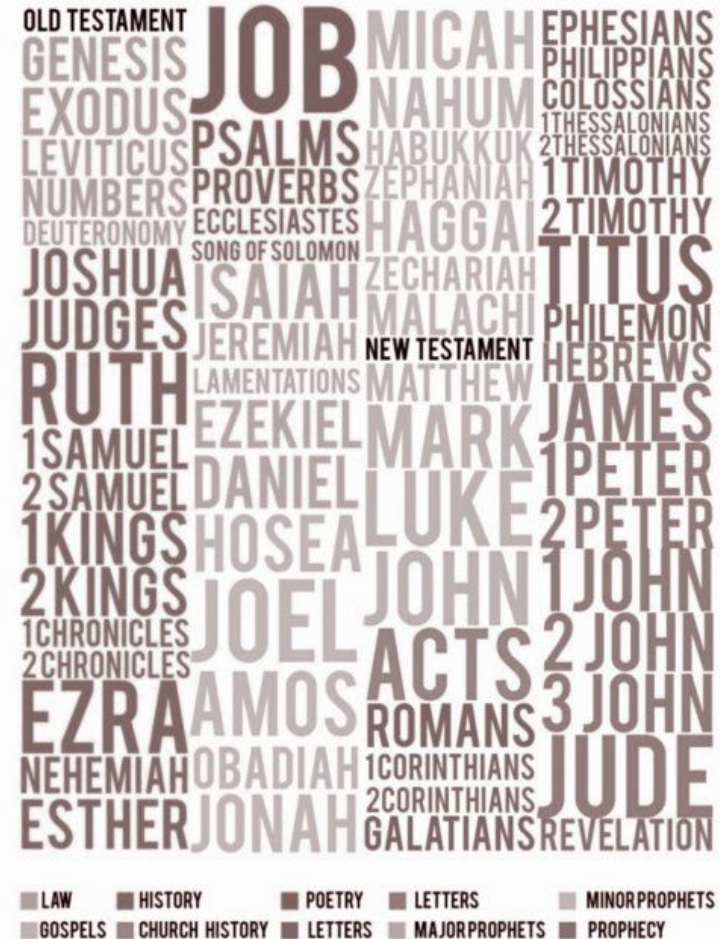
A theological, historical, and
scientific commentary on
Genesis 1-11

*Refuting Evolution, Refuting Compromise,
Creation on Earth? Refuting Dawkins on evolution.*

Genesis 1-11 as Literalistic History

Genesis: History or Poetry or Allegory?

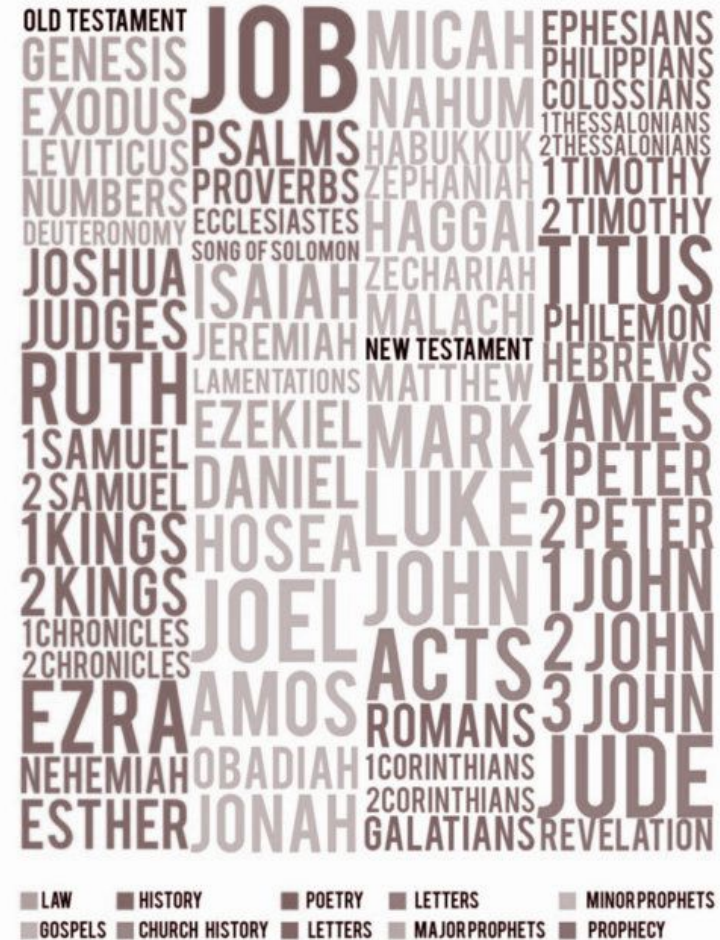
- **Sarfati requires a grammatico-historical meaning**
 - Even poetry is interpreted in this way, so this is not really helpful
- **Sarfati argues for a genre of “History”:**
 - *Waw* (i) consecutive verb form typical of historical narrative
 - Numerical studies of verb forms show Genesis is narrative, not poetry
 - Genesis 1-11 is similar to historical books



Genesis 1-11 as Literalistic History

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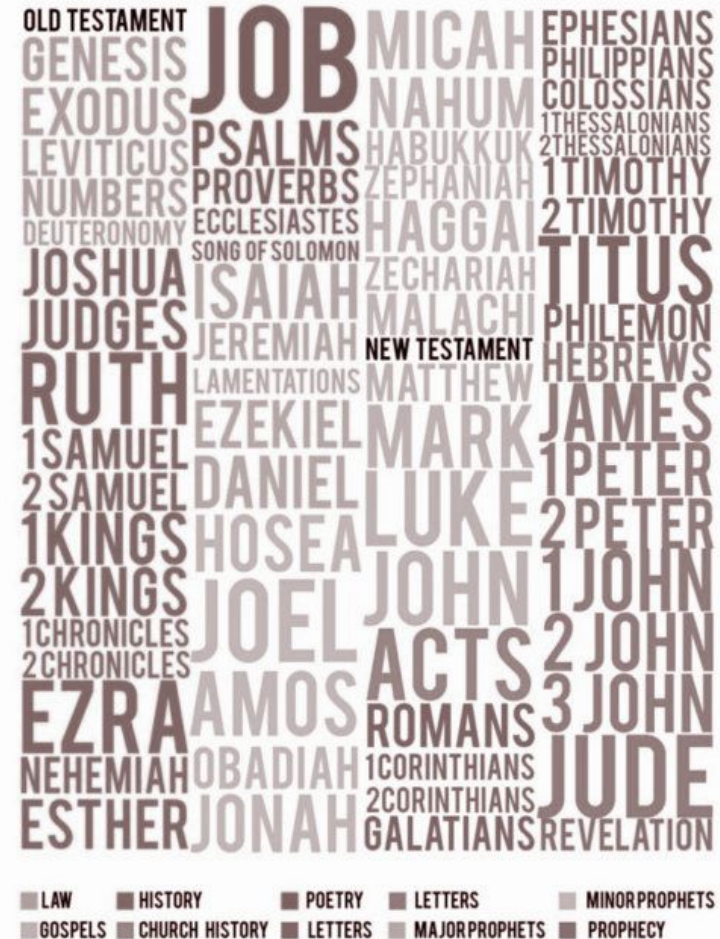
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Genesis 1-11 as Literalistic History

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 - ~~Numerical studies of verb forms show Genesis is narrative, not poetry~~
 - Indicates narrative prose, not necessarily history
 - ~~Genesis 1-11 is similar to historical books~~
 - Genesis has been universally divided at chapters 11-12 because interpreters see a distinct *difference* between the two parts

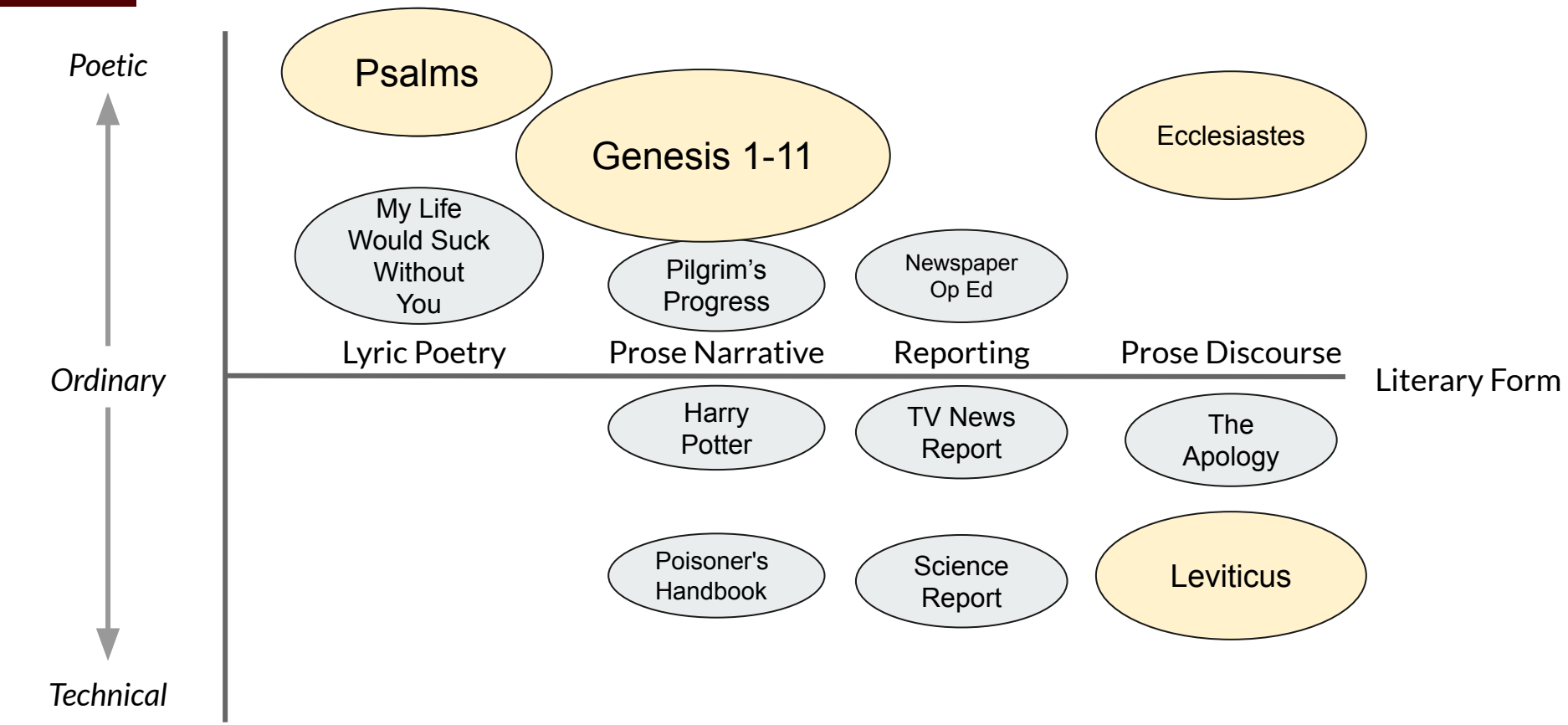


Genesis is History, Not Poetry or Allegory [?]

- Is “history” even a relevant category of genre?
 - Even poetry can convey accurate historical truth (c.f. Exodus 15)
- Why are these only options?
 - What about mytho-history (proto-history)?
- There are an insufficient range of alternatives
 - Genesis 1-11 is not:
 - Poetry
 - Genesis 1-11 is:
 - Prose narrative.
- **Prose narrative ≠ History**



Literary Form vs. Language Type

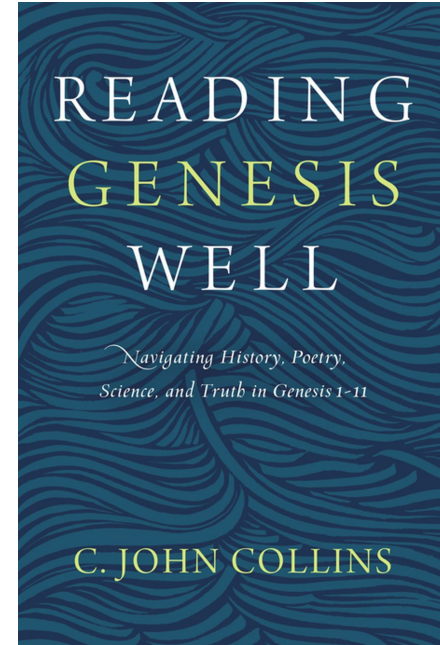


Language Type

- Sarfati restricts his analysis of literary genre to **grammar and style**.

Remember: **Genre ≠ literary form ≠ style ≠ register ≠ language**

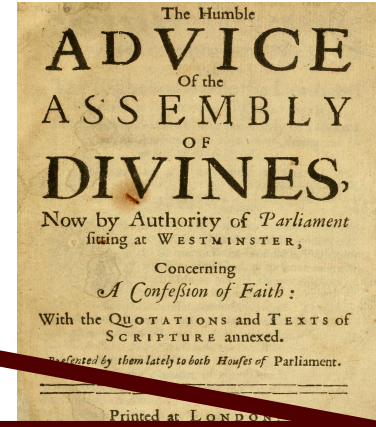
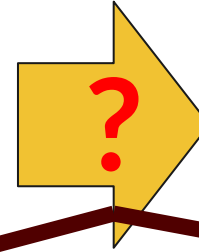
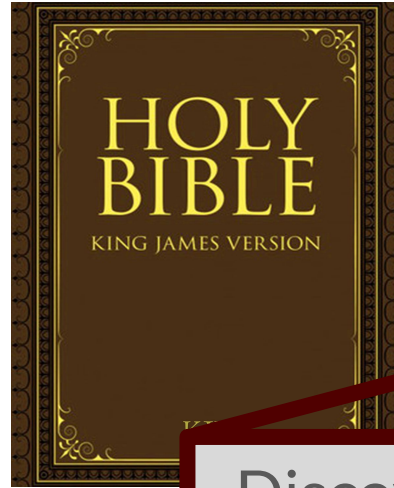
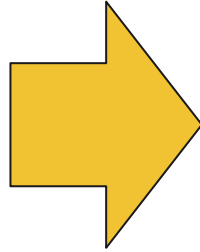
- Genesis is written in poetic language, for example:
 - The presence of assonance and wordplay
 - The use of extended metaphors and divine anthropomorphism
- **To determine genre, you must answer Lewis' questions**
 - “What is it for?” And “What does it do?”
 - There is no real indication that the author is concerned with communicating “science” or things like the chronology of the days of creation.



This exploration of the various structures and themes of Genesis 1 in terms of patterns and parallels has indicated several possible ways in which the narrative is characterized by intentional rhetorical and poetical devices. While not a historical narrative per se, it does present the creation event in a series of sequential or subsequent (logical or chronological) steps or stages or phases. At the same time, some of these may be chiasmic, so a linear set of steps is not necessarily presented, rather a literary means of fronting or focusing on certain key or theological perspectives seems evident. These data suggest that the nature of this story is highly stylized and structured, and does not present itself as an obvious linear movement of creational acts.³⁸ The author of Genesis 1 was principally concerned with the meaning (theology), not the mechanics (chronology) of creation. Such poetics do not disallow a text's ability to express historical and factual information (as the Psalms demonstrate); but the use of a normal work week of six days does not preclude the author from having a functional or theological or symbolic purpose for that image. A rigid, literal hermeneutic is not a truly viable option for reading this passage. Whatever its purposes or propositions, its style is sublime. Genesis 1 embodies no simple string of successive or consecutive acts, although consecutive verbs predominate. These latter show sequence consistent with the author's plan to use a week from day one to seven to encapsulate his creation theology, but do not have to be used to communicate chronological acts in history. The answer to why the author employed a normal week of seven days (six creational ones) may be as much functional or theological as mechanical or temporal. The mere presence of *waw* consecutive or use of וַי as a normal day does not prove that the author's purpose was the time of creation. Similarly, the use of numerous poetics does not prove that his purpose was non-historical and only theological or symbolic. One may conclude, on the basis of what has been shown, the text combines highly poetic informality with a degree of formality.

What Does the Bible Teach?

GOD



Discovering the **MEANING**

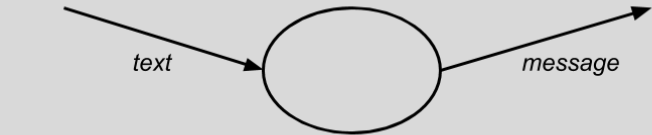
Author

Audience

text

message

Shared World



What does this mean for our study of Genesis?

1. **It is important to put yourself into the shoes of the ancient author and audience**
 - You cannot do this without trying to understand their **shared world**
 - One part of doing this is by being familiar with the literature they would have known
 - Ask: “How would an ancient hearer have understood this?”

2. **Cooperate with the author to discover their meaning**
 - Refusing to recognize the form of communication the author is using fails to cooperate in the act of communication

3. **Genesis 1-11 is related in some way to other ANE texts, but the nature of this relationship is complicated**
 - Themes and episodes from ANE literature are also present in Gen. 1-11
 - However, there are glaring differences, primarily in theology
 - NOTE: Genesis is not *derived* from ANE myths

4. Some Old Testament scholars classify Genesis as Mytho-History

- This technical use of the word “myth” does not imply falsehood
- Mytho-history implies a true interest in history and historical persons by the author
- In particular, the genealogies demonstrate this interest in “real” history

5. If Genesis is Mytho-History, we can't assume details are intended as historical

- All of Genesis 1-11 could still be literally true, but the text does not intend to “affirm” or “teach” this literality, as it is not intended by the author
- However, the **genealogies** suggest that the author intended his characters to be taken as **real historical persons**

6. The Mytho-Historical genre does not extend beyond Genesis 11

7. After understanding the original author's meaning, what do New Testament authors have to say?

Scientific-Theological Battlegrounds

General Question	Biblical Data	Scientific Data	Integrative Views
How old is the earth/universe?	Days of Genesis	Radiometric dating, distant starlight, etc.	Young-Earth vs Old-Earth
How is life related?	Animal kinds	Fossils, morphology, similar genetic code	Common ancestry vs common design
How did life diversify?	God's action in creation	Mutation + selection	Creationism vs Intelligent Design vs Darwinism
How did humanity originate?	Eve and Adam, Adam-Christ typology	Shared primate ancestry, population genetics, etc.	Historical Adam vs Non-Historical Adam

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Next Time: How Do We Integrate Scripture + Science?

Thursday Sep 17 / 7:30pm CST / Central Church + via ZOOM

Further reading/watching/listening

1. John C. Collins. *Reading Genesis Well*
2. William Lane Craig. *Defenders Podcast Series 3: Excursus on Creation of life and biological diversity*
3. Crash Course Mythology. <https://youtu.be/HeX6CX5LEj0>
4. The Bible Project. Genesis CH1-11. <https://youtu.be/GQI72THyO5I>
5. The Bible Project. Genesis part 1. <https://youtu.be/KOUV7mWDI34>
6. The Bible Project. How to Read the Bible: Literary Styles.
<https://youtu.be/oUXJ8Owes8E>
- 7.

Appendix

- Papias of Hierapolis (disciple of John)
 - Hexaemeron of Anastasius Sinaita (961): Viewed paradise in Genesis as image of the Church
 - Eusebius and Jerome tend to be against this suggestion.
- Records shows there are lost hexaemera (pg. 36 footnote)
- Theophilus :
 - Creatio ex Nihilo. mostly literal, but some allegorization.
- Origin
 - Gen 1 refers to creation of spiritual man, gen 2 refers to creation of man's body
- Hippolytus
- Methodius
- Victorinus Petauionensis
- Basil the Great

Hebrew Myth (Egyptian?)

- This is the most controversial, and most unfamiliar
- Consider Miller and Soden
 - Trained at DTS
- Argue that genesis author used forms and genre from Egyptian mythology
- Thus, the chronology is non-literal, but the story is designed to convey theological truths
- Puts Genesis into context with ANE literature
- Similar to Egyptian polemic views

“A fresh and harmonious perspective on an issue of vital importance.”
—PHILIP YANCEY, best-selling author

IN THE BEGINNING... WE MISUNDERSTOOD

*Interpreting Genesis 1
in Its Original Context*



JOHNNY V. MILLER | JOHN M. SODEN

Hebrew Myth

- However, parallels to Egyptian creation stories are weak
 - There is no single Egyptian creation story
 - Surface parallels might be wrong

- But what if it is not about rehashing Egyptian mythology?

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Dangerous Words: “Genesis is a Myth”

- The term myth, in this case, can be very misleading
- Myths are NOT false stories
- They are sacred narratives that describe how things came to be

- How should the genre of myth then be understood?
 - If myths are a unique genre of literature, that has an important place in the cultures that use them



- The claim is NOT that Genesis 1-11 is copied or derived from ANE myths
 - Only flood story is even arguably not original

- The claim is that if it is of the same genre, and if we understand how cultures using myth understood them, then we can better understand genesis.

Etiological themes in Genesis

- Creation (without theogony)
- Origin of man
- Origin of pain and suffering
- Snakes...

- These are not typical of myth
- Linear genealogies
 - Single line of descent
- Segmented genealogies
 - Traces multiple lines of descent
- Both present in Genesis
- Myths usually don't tie events to historical occurrences in real-time

Genre of Mytho-History

- We have seen that we can classify Genesis 1-11 as “myth”
- But genealogies show a clear interest in history
 - Thorkild Jacobsen invented the term mytho-history
 - The Eridu Genesis
- Requires the narrative align the stories in REAL (historical) time

- Gordon Wenham
 - “This is a sensitive analysis of both texts.”
 - “myth is a loaded term which leads to misunderstanding. That is why I prefer Proto history.”

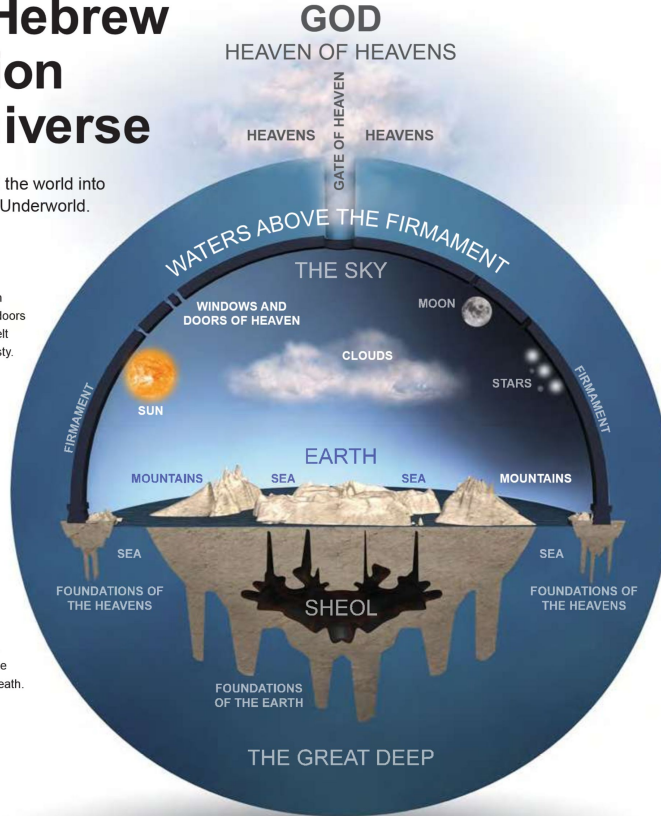
Ancient Hebrew Conception of the Universe

The ancient Israelites divided the world into Heaven, Earth, Sea, and the Underworld.

They viewed the sky as a vault resting on foundations—perhaps mountains—with doors and windows that let in the rain. God dwelt above the sky, hidden in cloud and majesty.

The world was viewed as a disk floating on the waters, secured or moored by pillars. The earth was the only known domain—the realm beyond it was considered unknowable.

The Underworld (Sheol) was a watery or dusty prison from which no one returned. Regarded as a physical place beneath the earth, it could be reached only through death.



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- Interpreting text requires
 - Understanding the author
 - Historical context
 - GENRE
- There have been many interpretations of Genesis
 - Many come from the flawed hermeneutic of concordism
 - Many are dont fully consider genre
- Genesis can reasonably be classified as Mytho-History
 - This seems to suggest that it may exhibit the plasticity and flexibility of other myths
 - BUT it has a clear historical interest that ties it to real time and history

Genre Analysis of Genesis 1-11

In order to interpret this passage correctly we have to follow some fundamental **hermeneutical principles**, or principles of interpretation. A fundamental hermeneutical principle that is important in this regard is interpreting a writing according to the literary genre or type in which it belongs. Considerations of genre are absolutely critical to the interpretation of a literary text because if the genre of that literary text is of the sort that isn't intended to be taken literally then you will misinterpret it if you do interpret it in a literal fashion. For example, when the psalmist says, *Let the trees of the wood clap their hands before the Lord*, he's not trying to teach botany. This is of the genre of poetry, and it would be a disastrous misinterpretation of the Psalms to apply a literalistic interpretation to what the psalmist says. Or, again, think how inappropriate it would be to apply a literalistic hermeneutic to the book of Revelation where the monsters and other figures represent nation-states or alliances of nation-states. They are symbolic. When I first became a Christian as a teenager, I thought that the book of Revelation was describing literal seven-headed monsters that were going to come out of the ocean and attack mankind. But, as you begin to understand the type of literature that the book of Revelation is, then you understand that Jewish apocalyptic literature is highly symbolic, and it is figurative, and that therefore it would be a mistake to take it literally. If you interpreted the book of Revelation literally you would fundamentally misunderstand it. So when we come to Genesis chapter 1, considerations of genre will be important in deciding how to interpret it correctly.

- Genre Analysis
- Try to determine how the original author and audience would have understood the text
 - No concordism
 - Misunderstands the text
 - Reads obsolete science into the text
 - Still seek integrated faith
-