

TASC

TASC's mission is to rebuild and strengthen the foundation of the Christian faith by increasing awareness of the scientific evidence supporting the literal Biblical account of creation and refuting evolution.

Joe Spears, Chairman

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It's Not Just About Genesis

By Everett Coates

As biblical creationists, we are often thought of by most Christians as purveyors of a “side bar” or less important doctrine. The criticism goes something like, “Why get so worked up about creation and the Flood? After all it's only Genesis—it's the Old Testament. The gospel is what's really important. It's all about Jesus, right? Besides, science disagrees with Genesis, and we don't want to be seen as ignorant and anti-science! The really intelligent people won't listen to the gospel and be saved if we say we believe Genesis.”

Well, if you're a regular reader of creation science literature you'll recognize the flaws in that argument. Biblical creationists are not anti-science. Most of the leaders in the creationist community are credentialed scientists with one or more advanced science degrees from secular universities. Yes, as creationists we do primarily discuss issues dealing with Genesis, and, yes, the focal point of Christianity is Jesus – His virgin conception and birth; His sinless life; His substitutionary, sacrificial death on the cross to pay for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2); and His physical resurrection from the tomb.

Ironically, the argument about intelligent people and creation versus the gospel is ridiculous on its face. If these people who deal in knowledge can't believe Genesis 1-11 because “science says that the creation of the universe is impossible” then it's true that they *won't* believe the gospel because science also says it's impossible for men to come back to life after being dead for three days! The entire Bible is a book about supernatural events.

As a reader of creation materials you will also know that the gospel, while presented in the New Testament, is pointed to and prophesied in clear detail in the Old Testament beginning in, of all places, Genesis 3:15. The Old Testament is not complete without the New, and the New Testament has no relevance to ancient world history, or to the present, without the Old.

The entire Bible is a complete unit presenting God's plan for redeeming His creation, especially mankind, from the destructive work of sin. As a result, the main focus of scientific creationists is not merely persuading people to believe that Genesis 1-11 is historically and scientifically true, but also to help them to see that the entire Bible is the authoritative Word of God. If the intellectual people that the critics of young-earth creation science are so

concerned about will not believe in a literal six-day creation, the fall of the first two people into sin resulting in a catastrophic, global flood, they will also not believe that a man could return to life after a physically devastating, tortured death on a cross to pay for their sins. Intellectualism causes challenges to the entire Bible, not just Genesis, and those challenges form a strong barrier to faith for many people.

My own salvation came as a result of first experiencing a faith crisis at the age of about 38 when I realized that I did not believe the Bible after having grown up in the church. My first doubts about scripture had first surfaced when I was a freshman at North Carolina State University in 1970. However, they were not about Genesis, but about the gospels. The first four books of the New Testament all seemed to be full of one contradiction after another. The first that I had noticed was in the accounts of the birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. Matthew leaves the reader with the impression that Jesus may have been as much as two years old when the magi, who are not mentioned by Luke, arrived to worship Jesus. That idea had never made sense to me since there was no reason that I could imagine that would keep Joseph, an experienced carpenter, from returning to his livelihood in Nazareth immediately after the census and the birth of Jesus. His means of providing for his wife and the Son of God were not in Bethlehem. Yet, apparently due to the time since the magi had first seen the star based on the two-year-and-under age of the male children killed by Herod (Matthew 2:16), most theologians teach the idea that Jesus was two years old when the magi came.

They also cite the fact that the magi came “into the house” (Matthew 2:11), stating that the two years gave Joseph time to build a house for his family. But again, why would they have stayed to begin with? But a new structure did not have to be built for the word “house” to be used.

The Greek word translated “inn” in Luke 2:7 is *kataluma*. In addition to “inn,” this word also has the meaning “guest room,” which is the way it's translated in Mark 14:14 and Luke 22:11 (NASB, ESV) or “guest chamber” (ASV, KJV). Those passages record that Jesus sent his disciples to prepare the guest room for the Passover before his crucifixion. This guest room is further defined as

an “upper room” (Greek *anogen* meaning “the second floor” in Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12). The only other time the word “inn” is used in the New Testament is in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34). There it’s translated from the Greek *pandocheion*, which has only the meanings “inn” or “place where all are received.”

If Joseph was turned away from a commercial inn why was *pandocheion* not used by Luke? It’s possible that there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the upper level guest room of the house of Joseph’s relatives so they were given the use of the stable, which in first century Judea was probably on the first floor of the house.¹ In that case, the magi would have actually “come into the house” to enter the stable, removing the need for two years to find a house. So the arrival of the magi could have been very soon after Jesus’ birth.

Another line of reasoning that points to the possibility of the arrival of the magi within days of Jesus’ birth are the Greek words *paidion* and *brephos*. Both are translated “child” in Matthew 2:11,13, and 14 (NASB) and are cited by scholars as meaning that Jesus was not an infant when the magi came. Both words have the meanings, “little child,” “young child,” (or “child”) or “infant,” and both are used in reference to Jesus as a newborn infant in Luke 2:16 and 17, so two years are not necessary because the words are translated “child” instead of infant.

But if the magi came soon after Jesus’ birth, then why did they apparently tell Herod that they had seen the star as much as two years earlier (the time related to Herod that they actually observed the star is not recorded in scripture)? Babylon was only a two-month journey from Jerusalem according to Ezra 7:9. So what took them so long? However, the only reason Babylon is assumed is the title “magi,” which was a Babylonian pagan priestly group. But if they came from eastern China rather than Babylon, the mystery is solved.

A trip along the entire length of the silk road took one year². So researching what may have been revealed to them by God in connection to the star in terms of Jerusalem being their destination and preparing for the journey may have taken one year, and the trip itself the second. A Chinese point of origin may not be so far-fetched since ancient pictographic characters from the earliest ancestors of the Chinese reveal that there was an original (but corrupted) knowledge of earth history going back possibly to ancient Babel before the dispersion

of languages.³ In addition, the prophet Jeremiah refers to the armies of Babylon coming from the north to destroy Jerusalem, not from the east, whereas the magi are said to have come from the east. None of this proves the magi came within days of the birth, but it at least provides a compelling possibility. If that was the case, their having seen the star two years prior has no impact on Jesus’ age at their arrival.

In like manner the apparent conflict between the timing of Joseph’s taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt in response to the angel’s warning and their trip to the temple in Jerusalem disappear. Nowhere in scripture are we told how long they were in Egypt. So it’s possible that both the flight from Bethlehem and the death of Herod (which is accepted as being in the same year as Jesus’ birth), could have been accomplished within the 40-day period required before Mary’s purification following the birth of a son.

All of these problems and possible solutions led me to begin to think about the gospels in a different light. God is not the author of confusion, and since the Bible is referred to by the Holy Spirit through Paul to be “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), I knew that there had to be an explanation for the apparent conflicts between the witness accounts of three years of Jesus’ life.

About twenty years ago I began to wonder whether trying to harmonize the four gospels the way law enforcement officers deal with multiple eye witness accounts to a crime would cause the conflicts to disappear. Of course, I was not the first person to ever think of doing that, but I had not known of their existence (I have discovered that seldom, if ever, do I have a truly original idea!). So I began by harmonizing the accounts of the birth of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke as markings in my Bible.

I began the harmonization with Luke 1:5-79, which describes the angel appearing to Zacharias to foretell the birth of his son, who would be John the baptist, the forerunner of Christ. From there I went to Matthew 1:18-25a, then, in order, to Luke 2:1-21, Matthew 2:1-22a, Luke 2:22-38, and finally Matthew 22b-23. Somewhat to my surprise the two accounts appeared to dovetail into one single narrative, resolving, at least to my satisfaction, other problems such as the flight to Egypt versus the trip to Jerusalem for the purification sacrifice for Mary, both of which appear on the surface to have been rather soon after Jesus’ birth.

I then wondered if the same would happen with the four accounts of the last days of Jesus’ life, including his crucifixion, and resurrection. The apparent discrepancies disappeared there as well! I then made a similar harmo-

¹ Associates for Biblical Research. 1995. Was Jesus born in a stable? a cave? a barn? <<http://christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a012.html>> Accessed 2016 Jun 24

² The Globalist. (2001 Jan 01) A silk road caravan. <<http://www.theglobalist.com/a-silk-road-caravan/>> Accessed 2016 Jun 24

³ Creation Ministries International. Chinese characters and Genesis. <<http://creation.com/chinese-characters-and-genesis>> Accessed 2016 Jun 24

nization of Jesus' teaching about the events leading up to his return at the end of the age.

Needless to say, God's showing me, first, that the Genesis account of creation, the Fall, and the judgment of the global flood is historically and scientifically accurate and, second, that the gospels are not in conflict and instead confirm the historicity of Jesus as our crucified and resurrected Savior had a profound impact on my faith! I no longer had to put up with criticisms of the Bible as being irrelevant and of my faith as being a blind acceptance of useless myths.

So, biblical and scientific creationism has given those who are not blinded by a false, pseudo-scientific philosophy (evolution) a faith in the entire Bible as the inerrant word of God. It is a faith that is unassailable by atheists and even well-meaning but deluded old-earth "creationists." Followers of Jesus Christ no longer have to be intimidated into silence by fools who say that there is no God (Psalm 14:1) or well-meaning Christians whose understanding of the Bible has been corrupted by them.

It's entirely possible that if the theologians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had not been so eager to maintain their acceptance within the secular intellectual community by trying to force-fit evolution into Genesis, the church might not have experienced the destructive conflict over the authority and inerrancy of the Bible. That struggle spanned the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, and indeed still exists within the church. But the modern biblical and scientific (young-earth) creation movement that began with the publication of *The Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris led to a renewed understanding among many Christians that the entire Bible is the inerrant written Word of God and, therefore, it is entirely true.

No, being a creationist is not just about Genesis. It's about the entire Word of God! ☩

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, July 14, 7:00 pm, Providence Baptist Church,
6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 207

Echoes of Jurassic

At the July TASC meeting Dr. Jeff Gift will review the recent publication, *Echoes of Jurassic*, by molecular biologist and dinosaur researcher Dr. Kevin Anderson, director of the Van Andel Research Center in Chino Valley, Arizona. Dr. Anderson believes that recent reports of soft tissue and proteins in dinosaur fossils may represent the most significant paleontology discovery of this century. Can tissue and proteins possibly survive in these fossils for 85 million years? *Echoes of the Jurassic* presents a clear and concise understanding of both the science and the controversy surrounding this question. Dr. Gift will also discuss Bob Enyart's recent June 8 interview with Dr. Anderson:

<http://kgov.com/molecular-biologist-kevin-anderson-on-dinosaur-soft-tissue-discovery>

Dr. Anderson's book is available for just \$6 at <https://www.crsbooks.org/index.php/crs-publications/crs-original-books/echoes-of-the-jurassic.html>