

Genesis 1-2

Jesus' reading

Interpretation of Genesis 1-2

In the judgment of this writer, the handling of scripture that arises from claims that *theistic evolution* or *evolutionary creationism* are the mechanisms of God's creation underlying the narrative in Genesis 1-2 is most objectionable, rather than the claim itself. Yet, for the avoidance of doubt, I believe that Genesis 1-2 describes a special creation that does not involve *theistic evolution* or *evolutionary creationism* as the mechanisms of creation and I believe that the creation of Adam and of the woman from his side are the creation of the sole ancestors of all the men and women that have populated the earth since then.

We can take the views of the biblical scholar, Peter Enns¹, as representative of a range of such treatments of Genesis 1-2. Peter Enns has developed what he terms an "incarnational" view of scripture in which these writings, like trinitarian understanding of Jesus as both God and man, are both divine and human. He has done so in the face of the competing claims of evolution against the biblical account of creation. But it is very difficult to reconcile his belief with *verbal inspiration* or the statement of Proverbs 30:5:

"Every word of God proves true"²

Peter Enns has written extensively on a range of biblical topics, including on the website of *Biologos*,³ an organisation that presents an evolutionary understanding of God's creation. In 2010, Peter Enns *blogged* three entries under the title *Israel's Two Creation Stories* in which he sets out to demonstrate that Genesis 1 and 2 "have different time scales, views of God's creative role, and order of events" and that "the two accounts bear similarities to other Ancient Near Eastern creation narratives, giving a good reason to think twice before reading these chapters as literal descriptions"⁴.

In this article, we shall take a single-minded look at Peter Enns' claim, based on his observations mentioned above, that Genesis 1 and 2 "cannot be harmonized" and that "they were never intended to be"⁵. We shall do this by examining how Jesus read Genesis 1-2.

have you not read?

Jesus refers to the creation of man and woman to substantiate his teaching that *no man should separate what God has joined* (Mt 19:3-6; Mk 10:2-9). The way Jesus quotes from Genesis 1-2 illustrates clearly how he read the relationship of these two chapters. Whilst there are differences in how Jesus' teaching is portrayed in Matthew and Mark, peculiar to each gospel's purpose, Jesus' understanding of the relationship between Genesis 1 and 2 is consistently made manifest in **both** these gospel records.

The teaching narrated in each gospel is analysed against Genesis 1-2 in the table below:

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Enns [referenced March 9, 2015].

² Scriptures quoted are from ESV unless otherwise stated.

³ <http://biologos.org/>.

⁴ <http://biologos.org/blog/series/israels-two-creation-stories> [referenced March 9, 2015].

⁵ *ibid*, Part 1.

<u>Matthew 19:4-5</u>	<u>Genesis 1-2</u>	<u>Mark 10:6-8</u>
<i>he who created them from the beginning</i>	<i>the beginning</i> in both gospel records is plainly a reference to Genesis 1:1 Matthew's expression <i>created them</i> is clearly taken from the final clause of Genesis 1:27	<i>from the beginning of creation</i>
<i>[he] made them male and female</i>	both gospel records include Jesus' reference to the final clause of Genesis 1:27	<i>God made them male and female</i>
<i>therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh</i>	both gospel records include Jesus' reference to Genesis 2:24	<i>therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh</i>

It is very plain from this initial analysis that Jesus employs two aspects of Genesis 1 and one of Genesis 2 in order to establish his teaching about marriage. In order to evaluate Jesus' reading of the relationship between Genesis 1 and 2, and to draw conclusions about this, it is important that we consider a couple of things:

- The significance of *from the beginning* which is employed in both gospels (Mt 19:4,8; Mk 10:6).
- How the two gospels record Jesus' connection of parts of Genesis 1 with his citation of Genesis 2:24.

This is what we shall now proceed to do.

from the beginning

In Matthew 19:8 and Mark 10:6, Jesus' use of *from the beginning* occurs as part of a contrast he draws with the reference made by the Pharisees to the law of Deuteronomy 24. The thrust of Jesus' contrast was that God's revelation about marriage pre-dated the giving of the law and so takes precedence. But the significant point about this for our purposes is to note that it is plain that **everything** that Jesus says about marriage in his use of parts of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2:24 took place **at** the *beginning* of which he speaks. Both the *making of male and female* (Ge 1:27) and the pronouncement about a *man leaving his parents and holding fast to his wife* (Ge 2:24) **both occurred** at a time Jesus calls "the beginning", Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 therefore took place **at the same time**.

We will now turn to how the two gospels connect Jesus' reference to parts of Genesis 1 with his citation of Genesis 2:24.

connecting Genesis 1 and 2

Matthew connects the *making of male and female from the beginning* with Jesus' reference to Genesis 2:24 by use of the phrase "and [God] said (*kai eipen*)" (Mt 19:5, my rendering). This conjunctive expression clearly connects what the Lord says after this introductory expression with the same chronological locus that he established at the commencement of his response to the Pharisees. That is, as we have seen by considering Jesus' use of *from the beginning*, God's declaration in Genesis 2:24 took place *at the beginning*. It is crucial that we weigh the significance of this: for Jesus, it was at the time of *the beginning* when God *made male and female* that he also made the declaration recorded in Genesis 2:24. In Jesus' reading of Genesis 1-2, the two chapters coincide chronologically.

The way that Mark connects Jesus' reference to aspects of Genesis 1 with his use of Genesis 2:24 differs from Matthew but the substantive result is the same, even though it is a more involved route to this point.

Mark establishes a causal relationship between God's *making male and female from the beginning* and what he declares a man will do in Genesis 2:24: "for this cause" (Mk 10:7, ASV). The fact God made man "male and female" (Mk 10:6; Ge 1:27) is **the reason why** "a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife" (Mk 10:7; Ge 2:24). But in Genesis 2, the causal relationship of God's declaration in Genesis 2:24 is with what the man says in Genesis 2:23. Having brought the woman to the man so that he could name her (Ge 2:22; cf 2:19), the man pronounces: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Ge 2:23). And it is this pronouncement that causes God's declaration in Ge 2:24: "**Therefore** a man shall leave his father and his mother...". The fact that man called the one who was brought to him "woman" because of the manner of her creation (Ge 2:23) is **the reason why** "a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife" (Ge 2:24).

From these considerations it is clear that the reason given by Mark for God's pronouncement in Genesis 2:24, that God made them "male and female", coincides with the reason given in Genesis 2 for God's pronouncement, that is, that the man names her "woman" because of the manner of her creation. We can tabulate these matters to establish this point with greater clarity:

<u>Mark 10</u>	<i>God made them male and female</i>	is the reason why	<i>a man shall leave his father and mother</i>
<u>Genesis 2</u>	<i>she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man</i>	is the reason why	<i>a man shall leave his father and his mother</i>

This tabulation highlights that *God's making man male and female* (Mk 10:6; Ge 1:27) coincides with the woman's naming *because she was taken out of man* (Ge 2:23) as **the reason** for a man leaving his father and his mother. Given the earlier findings, that Genesis 1 and 2 both took place at "the beginning", we know why this is so: the making of "female" (Ge 1:27) is explained in more detail in Genesis 2 and summarised by Adam in his naming of her (Ge 2:23). The making of "female" (Ge 1:27) coincides with the explanation of her having been "taken out of man" (Ge 2:23); and it follows from this that Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7,18-24 speak of the same creative event.

conclusions: Jesus' reading

- The formation of Adam and then the making of Eve out of his side, as recorded in Genesis 2, is just another portrayal of the creation of male and female of man in Genesis 1:26-27 and this was an event that took place at *the beginning* introduced to us in Genesis 1:1. Genesis 1 and 2 have the same timescale: that which Jesus describes as *the beginning*⁶.
- From Jesus' perspective, Genesis 1-2 are narratives of the same creation. They are integral and in harmony.

These conclusions are not merely to dismiss Peter Enns' observations about narrative differences between Genesis 1 and 2. They illustrate that any reading of the these narrative differences ought to be directed at discovering scripture's didactic purposes from them and requires a handling of these chapters that treats them as integral chapters that are in harmony. And we ought to handle Ge 1-2 in a harmonised, integral framework on the authority of the one who said he spoke only those things he learned from his father because of which, in part, he was raised from the dead, the grave not being able to hold him.

⁶ This illustrates that Jesus' reading of Genesis 1-2 obviates a handling of Genesis 1:1 that sees the creation of the heavens and the earth "in the beginning" as an event which is chronologically earlier than the creative acts in Genesis 1:3 onwards. In Jesus' reading of Genesis 1-2, "the beginning" is a time that extends from Genesis 1:1 at least through to Genesis 2:24.

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