

Adam: Real Man or Myth?

I. Introduction

Until the 19th Century Adam was universally seen as the originator of the human race from whom every human descended. There are now those who self-identify as evangelicals who are currently calling upon Christians to abandon this historic teaching because it conflicts with the *settled science* of human evolution, and that Genesis simply mimics ancient Near Eastern creation myths. There are several variations of this new teaching:

- A. Some would still insist on a literal Adam but that he was evolved from previously evolved hominims. They are compelled into this position because of the many references to the man, Adam, where he is mentioned 23 times in 9 biblical books. Several times he is mentioned as the first man (see Luke's genealogy). It would also involve rejecting Paul's clear teaching in Romans 5. To deny the Bible's own teaching would be to deny its authority in other areas. If the events as told in the Gen. 1-11 are hard to believe what about a virgin birth, walking on water, or resurrection from the dead?
- B. Some believe the text is not meant to be taken literally and is tantamount to other Near Eastern creation myths and should be treated as such. Philosopher, Bill Craig, believes the early chapters of Genesis have all the characteristics of myth. He has coined his view of the early chapters of Genesis as *mytho-history*.

II. The interpretative assumptions of the revisionists and critique:

- A. Nature is the 67th book of the Bible. No, **nature is not on the same level as Scripture**; it does not have the same magisterial authority as Scripture. Prof. Stephen Wellum says: *...equal weight is given to general and special revelation, namely the "book of nature" (science) and the "book of Scripture," but inevitably it is always Scripture which seems to get re-interpreted in light of current thought. Instead of questioning the "assured results of science," the Bible is recast in such a way that it now teaches something different than what it says.* Basically what happens, is those who reject the biblical account as it is, are making the scientific establishment and their own reasoning as the ultimate authority.
- B. The evolution of man is an established fact. In reality, the theory of evolution is under attack as never before even inside the scientific establishment. Please consult Briefing Outline #87 *Questioning Human Evolution*. See also the works of Stephen Meyer, Michael Behe, Jonathan Wells, Bill Demski, etc.
- C. The early chapters of Genesis were written in an ancient Near Eastern context and would have been understood as that by the original readers. It was definitely written so they could understand, but the Near Eastern myths were based on actual historical events in which Scripture gives us the pristine account.

II. How should Genesis be read?

- A. It was written to 15th Century BC Hebrews about to enter the promised land which was rife with pagan views of origins.
- B. God was the co-author with Moses. Those who hold a non-literal view, mytho-history view seem to downgrade the fact God the Holy Spirit was inspiring biblical writers. Moses, who was raised as an Egyptian, knew the worldview of that time, and when he wrote Genesis did not say: *I know these people have pagan views so I must explain things in a way they understand.* In other words: Moses (and presumably, God) accommodated their message so they could understand it.
- C. When Genesis 1-11 is read, the question asked should be: **What did God** intend to communicate.
- D. If God is the co-author would we not expect the original text to be considered inerrant?

IV. What you have to believe to accept these new interpretations of Adam:

- A. That for 2000 years of Church history we've been wrong, and Paul was wrong in Rom. 5:12; I Cor. 15:21-22.
- B. Theologian, Wayne Grudem, says not believing Adam was a literal person, and accepting a theistic evolution

of origins, involves a denial of major doctrines the church.

1. Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and perhaps never existed).
2. Adam and Eve were born from human parents.
3. God did not act directly or specially to create Adam out of the dust of the ground.
4. God did not directly create Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side.
5. Adam and Eve were never sinless human beings.
6. Adam and Eve did not commit the first human sins, for humans were doing morally evil things long before Adam and Eve.
7. Human death did not begin as a result of Adam's sin, for human beings existed long before Adam and Eve and they were always subject to death.
8. Not all humans have descended from Adam and Eve, for there were thousands of other human beings on Earth at the time that God chose two of them as Adam and Eve.
9. God did not directly act in the natural world to create different "kinds" of fish, birds, and land animals.
10. God did not "rest" from his work of creation or stop any special creative activity after plants, animals, and human beings appeared on earth.
11. God never created an originally "very good" natural world in the sense of a world that was a safe environment, free of thorns and thistles and similar harmful things.
12. After Adam and Eve sinned, God did not place any curse on the world that changed the workings of the natural world and made it more hostile to mankind. *Theistic Evolution*, p. 72-73

V. Concluding thoughts:

- A. God is truth and His revelation in the original manuscripts is likewise truthful, and must therefore, be of necessity without error. If we allow for errors as some do, how do we decide what is truth and error? *Ultimately the one deciding is then more authoritative than the Word itself*. If one allows for errors, how can it (God's Revelation) be trusted to be completely authoritative in all it addresses? This issue is of paramount importance in this postmodern age of relativism where a correspondence view of truth is denied.
- B. Kurt Wise says: [*The Bible*] *does not seek evidence for the veracity of God or Scripture, because such evidence would then have a higher status than God and His Word.* (*Faith, Form, and Time*, p. xv).
- C. If a proclamation of Scripture appears clear but is contrary to what scientific establishment says, I will hold to the word of Scripture and assume there must be something wrong with the science. Why do this? Because Scripture, God's Revelation to man, is the beginning of knowledge; it holds the position of supreme authority.
- D. I can only speculate why seemingly intelligent men and women are driven into the denial of biblical creation, but many of these professors received their training in institutions where human evolution was accepted and Scriptural integrity was not. It would seem that academic respectability and group think may account for much of the assent.
- E. *From the standpoint of theology, the debate is primarily about the proper interpretation of the first three chapters of the Bible, and particularly whether these chapters should be understood as truthful historical narrative, reporting events that actually happened. This is a question of much significance, because those chapters provide the historical foundation for the rest of the Bible and for the entirety of the Christian faith.* Grudem, *Theistic Evolution*, p,61.

Recommended:

Bailey, Mark. *Why Adam Was Real—And Why It Matters*. (Essay available online)
 Barrett, Matthew, & Caneday, Anel B. eds. *Four Views On The Historical Adam*. (See chapter by William D. Barrick)
 Heck, Joel D. *In The Beginning God*. (This little booklet is worth its weight in gold!)
 Madueme, Hans, and Reeves, Michael. eds. *Adam, The Fall, and Original Sin*.
 Mortenson, Terry. ed. *Searching for Adam*.
 Phillips, Richard D. ed. *God, Adam, and You*.
 Turpin, Simon. *Adam: First and Last*.
 VanDoodewaard, William. *The Quest For The Historical Adam*.
 Versteeg, J.P. *Adam in the New Testament*.