

Lost World of Genesis 1 Questions

Starter questions

Overall impressions of the book?

- rate from 1-10

What were some of the things you most appreciated?

- feel free to share a quote

What was something you disagreed with?

- Feel free to share a quote

Introduction:

Are there reasons some may feel uncomfortable comparing Genesis with other Ancient Near Eastern literature? How might we answer these concerns?

Proposition 1

Beyond the biblical adoption of ancient cosmic geography, what are some other ways in which God accommodates his message to human limitations? What does this tell us about the character of God?

Proposition 2

Is it difficult to distinguish functional existence (and origins) from material existence? How does our modern mindset make this distinction challenging for us? What do you think makes this concept challenging for us?

Proposition 3

What are some resonances between God's creative work (*bara*) in Genesis 1, and the creation (same verb) of the things listed in Table 1 (pp. 40-41)? How does understanding this range of "creation" meanings inform our concept of God as Creator?

Proposition 4

Walton writes that the created functions described in Genesis are human-centered (or anthropocentric) which contrasts starkly with Ancient Near Eastern literature which focuses on creation meeting the needs of the gods. What does this say about our God, and about his decision to create a world?

Proposition 5

Walton avoids suggesting that the ancient science of Scripture is untrue. Instead he concludes it has simply been replaced as science progressed (p. 60). What do you think of Walton's approach to the idea of scientific "truth"?

Proposition 6

Walton see the creation of Adam from dust and Eve from Adam's side as having archetypal, rather than just material, significance (pp. 68-70). What do you think about this interpretation?

Proposition 7

Has reading this chapter changed your view of the significance of Day 7? How?

Proposition 8

If the cosmos is understood as being God's temple, then its creation (as seen in Genesis 1) has as its focus God's presence rather than how God created. How significantly does this kind of "temple understanding" alter your view of the Genesis 1 narrative?

Proposition 9

Walton wrote that the Genesis account refers to 7 - 24 hour days that are about functional origins rather than material. Does this then require us to place this week in history somewhere on the 14 billion year timeline of the universe's existence?

Proposition 10

Walton writes that young people pursuing a scientific career shouldn't have to choose between the Bible and mainstream science. From your own experience, how has the church done in conveying this message? What are some of the other messages the church tends to convey regarding science and scientific endeavors?

Proposition 11

Walton's approach is really about thinking how the ancient readers would approach the text at "face value", not how modern readers would. Do you think his approach succeeds as a literal reading of the text?

Proposition 12

Walton argues that to truly take Genesis 1 seriously, we must correlate it with its ancient context, not our modern science (p. 110). But is there a role for science in aiding our biblical interpretation?

Proposition 13

Walton suggests that we see scientific and theological explanations as different layers in a cake, rather than separate slices of a pie. Do you find this analogy helpful in picturing the relationship between science and faith? Where might the metaphor break down?

Proposition 14

To what extent should we differentiate between God's roles as creator and sustainer? Do you agree with Walton's way of seeing these as similar yet not synonymous?

Proposition 15

Walton suggests that it is difficult for the arguments of the "Intelligent Design" movement to avoid sounding like "god of the gaps" arguments (pp. 127-28). Do you agree?

Proposition 16

Think of a time when you have (or do) feel uncomfortable with evolution. Do you think that the discomfort is due to the way evolution was presented (e.g., as being anti-God or with a rejection of purpose) as opposed to the mere science itself?

Proposition 17

Have some of your own thoughts about God or your relationship with him been challenged or strengthened through reading Walton's book? In what way?

Proposition 18

Do you agree with Walton that public science education should be neutral about questions of ultimate purpose (teleology)?

Conclusion

Does Walton's case bring closure for you or open up a fruitful way of thinking about Scripture?