

The Lost World of Adam and Eve Discussion Questions

There are more questions in this guide than we will have space for on our discussion night. Use them as a guide for your deepening thoughts as you navigate the book. This discussion guide is a selection of questions guide provided by Benjamin J. Lappenga & Ashley Huizinga via Dordt College (citation below).

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Pre-ambles Questions

1. Overall impressions of the book (rate 1-10)?
2. What were some of the things you most appreciated? Feel free to share a quote.
3. What was something you struggled or disagreed with? Feel free to share a quote.
4. "[I]nformation from the literature of the ancient world or new insights from scientific investigation may appropriately prompt us to go back to the Bible to reconsider our interpretations" (14). When might it be appropriate (if ever) to let science influence biblical interpretation? When would it be inappropriate?

Proposition 1: Genesis Is an Ancient Document

5. When it comes to understanding the natural world, how might our modern worldview differ from that of an ancient Near-Eastern culture? How might this influence our interpretation of the Bible?

Proposition 2: In the Ancient World and the Old Testament, Creating Focuses on Establishing Order by Assigning Roles and Functions

6. Is the situation described in Genesis 1:2 about lacking *material* or lacking *order and purpose*?

Proposition 3: Genesis 1 Is an Account of Functional Origins, Not Material Origins

7. How is the analogy of a "home" versus a "house" helpful to understand how Genesis describes creation? (See also pp. 51-52.)

Proposition 4: In Genesis 1, God Orders the Cosmos as Sacred Space

8. Who is the original audience of the creation account, Adam and Eve, or Israel? How does this audience help us understand the symbolic

importance of the Sabbath week, the number seven, and "sacred space"?

Proposition 5: When God Establishes Functional Order, It Is 'Good

9. According to Walton, does Genesis 1 suggest that everything pre-fall is perfect, with no pain, suffering, predation, or death? Is the ultimate order of new creation achieved at the end of Genesis 1?

Proposition 6: 'ādām Is Used in Genesis 1-5 in a Variety of Ways

10. How do we know that Adam (*ādām* "human") and Eve (*ḥawwāh* "life") are not historical names, but instead are *assigned* names that are larger than the characters to whom they refer?

Proposition 7: The Second Creation Account (Gen 2:4-24) Can Be Viewed as a Sequel Rather Than as a Recapitulation of Day Six in the First Account

11. What problems (sequence, etc.) exist in Genesis 2-4 if we read Genesis 2 as a more specific account of what happened on day six of Genesis 1? What do you think of Walton's suggestion that the people in Genesis 1 may not be (only) Adam and Eve?

Proposition 8: 'Forming from Dust' and 'Building from Rib' Are Archetypal Claims and Not Claims of Material Origins

12. Does Walton argue that the Hebrew word *šēlā'* is better translated "rib" or "side"? Why?

Proposition 9: Forming of Humans in Ancient Near Eastern Accounts Is Archetypal, So It Would Not Be Unusual for Israelites to Think in Those Terms

13. Without getting too bogged down in the details of the ancient Near Eastern texts surveyed in this chapter, what is your impression of the comparative literature? Did you know there were so many parallels to the creation accounts that were circulated in the ancient world in which the Old Testament was first written? Does Walton suggest that the Bible is rooted in the same environment as these texts, departs from these texts, or both?

Proposition 10: The New Testament Is More Interested in Adam and Eve as Archetypes Than as Biological Progenitors

14. After reading about passages like Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, does Paul seem to be more concerned with the question of human origins *per se*, or with the effects of the fall?

Proposition 12: Adam Is Assigned as Priest in Sacred Space, with Eve to Help

15. What do you think of Walton's suggestion that perhaps Adam and Eve were the first *significant* humans, not necessarily the first humans?

Proposition 13: The Garden Is an Ancient Near Eastern Motif for Sacred Space, and the Trees Are Related to God as the Source of Life and Wisdom

16. Why does Walton think we make a mistake to think that the Genesis account of what happened in Eden is simply about “magical trees in a garden paradise” (124)? What is it about?

Proposition 14: The Serpent Would Have Been Viewed as a Chaos Creature from the Non-ordered Realm, Promoting Disorder

17. Although the serpent is later identified in the NT as Satan (Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9; 20:2), what are some reasons Walton gives for thinking about the serpent as an Israelite reader would? Does Walton classify the serpent as a creature of *non-order* or *disorder*?

Proposition 15: Adam and Eve Chose to Make Themselves the Center of Order and Source of Wisdom, Thereby Admitting Disorder into the Cosmos

18. What does Walton mean that “salvation is more importantly about what we are saved *to*... than what we are saved *from*” (148)?

Proposition 16: We Currently Live in a World with Non-order, Order and Disorder

19. What elements in Revelation 21 point back to Genesis 1-2 and show that *new* creation (not original creation) is when all non-order (not only disorder) will be resolved (see also p. 160)?

Proposition 17: All People Are Subject to Sin and Death Because of the Disorder in the World, Not Because of Genetics

20. How does defining the nature of the fall as “wanting to be like God” solve the dilemma of how Jesus is not subject to original sin?

Proposition 18: Jesus Is the Keystone of God’s Plan to Resolve Disorder and Perfect Order

21. With the understanding that the tower of Babel was a “ziggurat,” was the tower for people to reach heaven or about providing sacred space for God to enter? What then (according to Walton) was the sinful behaviour that God rejects, *pride*, or *creating sacred space for their own benefit*?

Proposition 19: Paul’s Use of Adam Is More Interested in the Effect of Sin on the Cosmos Than in the Effect of Sin on Humanity and Has Nothing to Say About Human Origins

22. Ever since the scientific revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have Christians focused more on the *existence* of Adam or the *vocation* of Adam? Why is this problematic, according to Wright?

Proposition 21: Humans Could Be Viewed as Distinct Creatures and a Special Creation of God Even If There Was Material Continuity

23. Walton does not deny that the easiest reading of the text (and one that has been believed for millennia) would suggest a *de novo* creation of human beings. Do you think that a failure to read it this way constitutes a rejection of biblical truths? Either way, has Walton's book helped you to understand why Christians who take the Bible seriously could read the text another way because of what we have learned from ancient Near-Eastern writings and from modern science?

Conclusion and Summary

24. Walton insists that the *roles and functions* of human beings as presented in the Bible cannot be confirmed through science. But he also insists that Genesis, read properly, will be compatible with the truths about our world that scientists uncover. Discuss these two claims and your own response.