**The Biblical Account of Origins**

**by Richard M. Davidson**

**(Short version)**

Script

Instructions: Advance the PowerPoint slides at every new paragraph and anywhere you see “/”

[1] The Biblical Account of Origins, by Richard M. Davidson

[2] Dr. Davidson’s article discusses the when, Who, how, and what of origins

[3] Focusing especially on the “when” questions

ABSOLUTE OR RELATIVE BEGINNING (don’t read)

[4] The first “when” question asks whether Genesis 1-2 describe an absolute or relative beginning.

[5] The answer depends on whether Genesis 1:1 is translated as an independent clause or a dependent clause.

[6] The independent clause affirms creation out of nothing, the existence of God before matter, and an absolute beginning of time for the cosmos. / The dependent clause does not.

[7] The author of this article prefers the independent clause for several reasons: / the Hebrew grammar and syntax, / the short stylistic structure, / the theological thrust, / the fact that all ancient versions translate the verse that way, / and the allusion to Genesis in John.

[8] From this evidence, the author concludes that Genesis 1:1 should be translated as an independent clause.

LITERAL OR NON-LITERAL (don’t read)

[9] The next “when” question

[10] asks whether the Genesis account of creation is meant to be taken literally or not.

[11] Because of the literary genre of Genesis 1-11, the literary structure of the book of Genesis, the temporal terms “evening and morning,” and the interpretation of the Genesis account by Jesus and the biblical writers…

[12] The author reaches this conclusion: Based upon the testimony of the Genesis account and later intertextual allusions to this account, I must join the host of scholars, ancient and modern—both critical and evangelical—who affirm the literal, historical nature of Genesis 1 and 2, with a literal creation week consisting of six historical, contiguous, creative, natural twenty-four-hour days, followed immediately by a literal twenty-four-hour seventh day, during which God rested, blessing and sanctifying the Sabbath as a memorial of creation.

[13] The third “when” question

[14] deals with whether there were multiple beginnings or only a single beginning. In other words, is there some kind of time gap at the beginning of Genesis?

[15] Translating Genesis 1:2 as “the earth *became* without form and void” has produced the active gap theory which suggests that Satan ruled a perfect creation here before his rebellion. / According to this idea, the chaotic state described in verse 2 happened as a result of experimentation by Satan or judgment by God because of Satan’s rebellion.

[16] This theory flounders purely on grammatical grounds. / According to the laws of Hebrew grammar, one must translate “the earth *was* unformed and unfilled,” not “the earth *became* unformed and unfilled.”/ Hebrew grammar leaves no room for the active gap theory.

[17] The author concurs with the traditional *initial “unformed-unfilled” view* which declares that God created “the heavens and earth” out of nothing at the time of their absolute beginning because it is the only interpretation that cohesively follows the natural flow of the verses, without contradiction or omission of any element of the text.

1. God is before all creation /
2. There is an absolute beginning of time /
3. When God creates the heavens and earth, at least the earth is at first unformed and unfilled/
4. God forms and fills the earth in six successive, literal, 24-hour days
5. And rests on the seventh day, blessing and sanctifying it as a memorial of creation

[18] There is one crucial aspect in this creation process about which it may not be possible to be dogmatic—*when* the absolute beginning of the heavens and earth in v. 1 occurred. / The “no gap” interpretation / sees vv. 1-2 all as part of the first day of the seven-day creation week. / The raw materials described in Genesis 1:1-2 were created on the first day. / The “passive gap” interpretation / says that verses 1-2 go together but are separated from verse 3 by gap of time. / The raw materials were created before—perhaps long before—the seven-day creation week. Both believe God was before any matter. The only question is *when* the absolute beginning occurred.

[19] The author prefers the passive gap interpretation for several reasons: / the beginning and ending pattern of each creation day,

[20] The difference between the dyad “heavens and earth” and the triad “heaven, earth, and sea”

[21] The Hebrew word for beginning, which refers to a period or duration of time which falls before a series of events,

[22] God’s creation by differentiating or separating previously-created materials, and the two-stage creation process from raw material described in Genesis 2.

[23] While the author prefers the passive gap theory, he acknowledges a possible openness of Genesis 1:1-2 that allows for either option.

RECENT OR REMOTE BEGINNING? (don’t read)

[24] One final “when” question

[25] asks whether the beginning was recent or remote—in other words, thousands or millions of years ago.

[26] The Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 give us a continuous record from Adam to Abraham, / using the word “begat” which in the OT always refers to direct physical offspring. / Scripture is also clear that from Abraham to the present is approximately 4000 years. / While the date cannot be calculated exactly, according to Scripture, the six-day creation week occurred *recently*, a few thousand years ago—not hundreds of thousands or millions or billions of years ago.

[27] The final piece of evidence offered in favor of a recent beginning is the character of God. It is totally out of character with the God of the Bible to allow a history of cruelty and pain to go on for long periods of time when it would serve no purpose in the cosmic controversy against Satan. The genealogies are a window into the heart of a loving, compassionate God.

WHO (don’t read)

[28] After dealing with several “when” questions, the author moves to the “who” of creation.

[29] Two different names for God appear in the creation accounts. / In Genesis 1 the name Elohim—the generic name for an all-powerful God—is used to emphasize His transcendence. / In Genesis 2, God’s covenant name, Yahweh, is used to emphasize that He is a personal God who enters into intimate relationship with His creatures. Only the Judeo-Christian God is both infinite and personal.

[30] Notice that no proof of God is provided. /God is the ultimate foundation of reality. /

The creation account provides a polemic against the polytheism, moral decadence, rivalry, mortality, and pantheism of the ancient near eastern gods.

[31] There are intimations of the plurality of the Godhead in the creation account. / The Spirit of God is mentioned in Genesis 1:2, / the creative Word appears ten times in Genesis 1, / and Genesis 1:26 says, “Let *us* make man in our image.” This plurality within the deity, whose character is one of covenant love might shed some light on the “why” of creation—to create other beings with whom He could share fellowship.

HOW (don’t read)

[32] Many would claim that the biblical creation accounts are not concerned with the “how” of creation, but only with the theological point that God created. It is true that Genesis 1-2 provide no technical scientific explanation of the divine creative process, but there is a great deal of attention given to the “how” of divine creation.

[33] The Hebrew word for create in Genesis 1:1 is used exclusively to describe God’s action. It is never used to describe human activity. It always describes something totally new that was effortlessly produced.

[34] Divine fiat emphasizes the centrality of the Word in the creation process. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth…For He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.

[35] Because of specific terminology used or avoided by Moses, it appears that the Genesis accounts were intended to provide a polemic against the ideas prevalent in Mesopotamian creation texts. Our world did not result from struggle between deities or with the forces of chaos. It did not happen because of sexual activity between the gods. Even the sun and moon were called the “greater light” and “lesser light” to avoid any inclination to worship them as gods.

[36] God created dramatically and aesthetically,

[37] forming the unformed on the first three days

[38] and filling the unfilled on the next three days

[39] The divine artistry of creation within the structure of space and time certainly does not negate the historicity of the creation narrative.

[40] Notice the relationship of day 1 to day 4,

[41] day 2 to day 5

[42] and day 3 to day 6.

WHAT (don’t read)

[43] The “what” section revisits the question of whether the whole universe or just our earth and solar system were created during creation week.

[44] In addition, a new question is raised about the fact that God says, “Let there be light” on day one, but the sun is not mentioned until day four. / One explanation says that God’s presence was the source of light for the first 3 days. Evidence for this is found by comparing verse 4 where it says that God divided the light from the darkness and verse 18 where it says that the luminaries divide the light from the darkness. Additional evidence is found in Psalm 104 where God is described as covering Himself with light as with a garment. / Another explanation suggests that the sun was present before but only became visible, was given purpose, or became fully functional on day 4. / The Hebrew syntax does not require the creation of the stars on day 4, and “He made the stars also” could be correctly considered parenthetical.

[45] Other Issues

[46] About the two creation accounts of Genesis 1-2, the author concludes that they are neither identical nor contradictory but complementary. Beginning in Genesis 2:7 a more detailed account of day six is given, focusing attention on humanity’s personal needs.

[47] About the issue of death/predation before sin, the author says this: Not only is there no death on this world before creation week, but there is no life! Genesis 1:1-2 thus make no room for living organisms to be present upon planet earth before creation week, let alone death and predation.

[48] For more details about the evidence used to support the author’s conclusions, listen to the longer article summary or read the article in its entirety in the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society.