

GENESIS 1-11 and the WORLDVIEW of the Bible

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The origin of this proposal comes from Mike Stallard's review at the publication of **A Dispensational Biblical Theology**. (2016) He said "Many detractors of Dispensationalism insist that this foists a preconceived theological system onto the Biblical text". In this text, Johnson "shows in a detailed way, the error of such thinking". In addition, he "more fully develops the Dispensational approach of Charles Ryrie". And my development was based on Ryrie's definition, "A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose". I appreciate Stallard's words because this was what I had hoped to accomplish.

At the same time, he acknowledges that not every Dispensationalist will agree with all that he says. I suspect that he would include himself among those who have disagreements. This is what I would like to address. I believe that our primary disagreements deal with a proper interpretation of Genesis 1-11. And that is not only my rejection of three dispensations, but the proposal that Genesis 1-11 expresses a worldview of the whole Bible.

Few would disagree that Gen. 1-11 provides a prologue to the book of Genesis. The literary style distinguishes it from the style of Gen. 12-50. But in my view, the content fits as a prologue for the whole of Scriptures. As a dispensationalist, I agree that one of the basic dispensational distinctives would be introduced, by implication, in Genesis 1-11. This central issue of **God's Glory** which is related to the overcoming of **evil**. God permitted **evil** to exist at the fringes of creation, with Adam being responsible to rule over a world, threatened by **evil**.

If a worldview is the state of human existence on earth, then that state is what Moses intends to frame in Genesis 1-11 after Adams fall into sin. This frame is in anticipation of the history of mankind. And that frame consists of seven predetermined truths.

The historical background of Covenant and Dispensational reasoning rest ultimately on Plato and Aristotle. The theological interpretations sought a foundation for knowing on different grounds. Plato was the philosophy followed in Alexandria. Plato had sought a heavenly ideal to found what can be known. What Plato sought in heaven; Augustine found in the New Testament revelation. It was the ideal realization of the Old Testament introductory revelation. So, interpretation was retrospective, allegorizing texts in the Old Testament based on terms of the ideal fulfillment, the Covenant of Grace. This covenant was not mentioned in the OT context.

Aristotle sought the foundation of knowledge in terms of a basic framework based on the first principles of thought present in the unknown: "All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge". Aquinas found a foundation of knowledge in terms of *causae veritatis* (causes of truth).

If my proposal of the role of Genesis 1-11 as a worldview is correct, then it will provide principles of revelation. These principles will frame the progress of revelation that unfolds in the dispensations that follow.

What are the principles in Genesis 1-11?

A . The state of human existence is framed within these truths;

1, God is the Creator and universal Ruler of the creation.

2 God permits the existence of evil within a good creation.

3. Adam responsible to mediate God's rule, lost that intermediate rule to Satan when he obeyed Satan's word. Now the human race was ruled by Satan.

4. After the invasion of evil, God pronounced judgment on Satan, in which hope for realization of a judgment was expressed in the **promise** of the seed of the woman. (Gen. 3:15) This promise begins to be fulfilled in a line of descendants who were introduced as an elect line, involving one in each generation. (Gen.5:1-32; 11:10-32)

5. The Human race, male and female, is depraved due to Adam's sin, living with a sentence of death. Yet God provided a skin covering for Adam and Eve, which they received by faith, and which enabled the believer to approach God through sacrifice. (Gen. 3:20,21) Thus God is also Savior.

6. Human Government was delegated to the nations with the people responsible to protect human life. A death penalty was instituted to enable the nation to enforce **the nation's law**. (Gen. 9:1-9) Government law opposed evil in the population.

7. God's glory will be revealed in his rule through promise, involving the Son of Man who will overcome and defeat evil in righteousness. Believing mankind, following the first advent, will be enabled to overcome evil.

B. Genesis 1-11 does not adequately represent three dispensations, because.

1 The first three dispensations are defined by characteristics of a dispensation rather than by an economy in God's outworking of his purposes. (Ryrie,33-35)

2 Ryrie questioned whether Conscience and Government are valid dispensations. What were the distinguishing features to justify the two? I agree that the institution of government is new in holding mankind responsible for opposing **evil** by law but it is not new in God's governance.

When God sent the world wide flood, was God not governing evil in the population?

3 Scripture provides direct evidence for four dispensations (administrations): Ephesians 1:10, the administration of the days of fulfillment—to bring everything together in Christ. (kingdom)

response to faith, God provided skin coverings so fallen mankind could still approach Him. Abel offered such a sacrifice that God introduced, while Cain didn't. After Abel was murdered, God provided Seth and this chosen one is the first in a line. So, an elect line began with Seth and Enosh (Gen. 4:25,26)

The fallen population followed the sin of Cain as reflected in the pattern of sin that succeeded,

Cain murdered Abel but pleaded for God's protection,
Lamech killed two who merely watched but celebrated it,
sons of God impregnated daughters of man, to pollute
the human race with Nephilim.

This sequence of evil represents an intensification of evil. God's judgment responded to the intensifying presence of sin with a worldwide flood in which the whole population was judged, except for Noah from the promised line. As a result, God's response alone addressed evil using the **promised descendant of Eve, who was righteous** to be delivered.

The Noah Stage

Noah in the line of the elect ones, was linked to the preflood world. Having been delivered in the ark from that world, so that after the flood, he stepped into a new world with a changed climate and growing season (Gen.8:22). He was also linked to Adam by an altar by which Noah approached God with thanksgiving. (Gen. 8:20)

Like Adam. Noah was appointed to populate the earth. (Gen.9:1) But unlike Adam, he wasn't appointed to rule. That was lost to Satan. Rather Noah was given a Covenant. There were these components in the covenant:

Animals are now fearful of mankind,
Animals are given to man to eat,
Promise of no more worldwide floods,
Human government encompassing responsibility will be to address evil. A
Law code protecting human life was instituted and enforced by
the death penalty.

So, in the **second response to evil**, God included the responsibility for evil under all of humanity, as prescribed by human government. It was **by man** that the guilty party was to be slain. God required the life of the guilty party, but mankind was to execute it.

This responsibility to govern as nations established the pattern of law in the history that followed. When God established Israel as a nation, the centerpiece was the **law code** in a more complete form. However, early dispensationalists overlooked what Paul said about the giving of the law: "Why then was the law given? It was **added alongside of promise**, for the sake of transgressions until **the Seed to whom the Promise was given**, would come....Is the law contrary to God's promises? Absolutely not! For if the law had been granted with the ability give life, then righteousness would certainly be on the basis of law. But Scripture imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the **promise** might be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe."(Galatians 3:19-22) The initial **promise** of the seed was in completed form the **promise** of Christ.

The Conclusion

The Noahic stage addressed evil, but through **law** executed through the nations. This revelation was completed in Daniel. However, in the progress of revelation, the law code in Israel combined with the provision of sacrifice, revealed that human obedience alone would be insufficient. Rather that inability of fallen mankind will need the **promised One to deal with evil efficaciously**. This revelation was completed in the Revelation.

Thus Genesis 1-11 introduces a worldview consisting of the essential truths that frame human existence. While the essential truths are introduced, the development of God's purposes awaits history and the progress of revelation. Ryrice identifies the one purpose of God in the mediated rule of man, finally realized through the Kingdom of God come to earth. But Genesis 3:15 also implies the purpose of deliverance from evil, as Satan strikes the promised One, yet this struck One is the Agent of Satan's judgment. So, the promised One must be delivered. Daniel envisions the first advent of Messiah when he is cut off (Dan. 9:25,26) and the second advent of the Stone, not cut out with hands (Dan. 2:34,35 and 2:44) or the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13,14 and 7:26,27). While the whole human race is responsible for evil, only the promised descendant of the woman will fulfill that responsibility. The remainder of the race are either delivered from judgment by faith in the promised descendant or are judged for their guilt as overcome by evil.