

“Yea, hath God said?”

Genesis 1 is not a poetic text, as the many expositors and theologians who buy into billions of years allege. It is prose. That has been established by statistical analysis of words used in each genre in over 900 chapters of Hebrew Scripture. The subgenre is history, so Chapter 1 is prose, a historical narrative, and historical narratives are literally true. Just because the narrative was composed with style doesn't make it a non-literal “poetic” text.

Moreover, Genesis 1 has a recurring formula, as does Genesis 5. Thus: “And God said..., Let there be..., And it was so,” and then God's evaluation, “And God saw that . . .” And then a time element. And in Chapter 5, “When x lived. . .” then, “He became the father of ...” followed by “And had other sons and daughters.” Then “He lived ...years.” Followed by “and he died.” (The formula doesn't hold only for Adam, Enoch and Noah.) Also this: Chapter 5 begins with a “*toledot*,” and there's also a “*toledot*” right between Chapters 1 and 2. So, since Chapter 5 is a genealogy, and Chapter 1 also has a formulaic pattern, Chapter 1 should be understood as a genealogy too. It's the genealogy of the heavens and earth. As genealogies are literally true, and as Chapter 5 is literally true, so must Chapter 1 be literally true. Tragically, many (most?) evangelical expositors, commentators, teachers and theologians won't accept this. Satan's challenge of the Genesis creation text is too compelling.

The Wall Street Journal printed the review of a book authored by cosmologists and reviewed by a cosmologist, arguing that the clumping of galaxies and other evidence militates so strongly against a “Big Bang” that almost everyone in cosmology is now searching for some other idea to replace the now totally rejected Big Bang. A bunch of imaginary ideas were listed, none accepted by anyone other than the person doing the imagining. One suggestion is, “Our universe is but one bubble in a champagne froth of universes.” This is science?

What Baruch Spinoza did in the 16th century was loose humanity from the Word of God. OK, Spinoza wasn't alone in this great project we call modernity; many others were, and are today, complicit. It was, and still is, Satan's wicked, primal (Genesis 3) strategy: “Yea, hath God said?” So in every area of human endeavor, whether politics, economics, culture, religion, science and more, humans are free—totally free, at *absolute liberty*, as if gods—to indulge themselves in whatever pleases them (that is, according to their innate, controlling sin nature), without concern for God's Word. So speculation and conjecture, however fanciful, without the slightest concern for truth or for evidence, saturates society and satisfies our minds. Champagne? Why not? Is it Science? Who cares, just so it's not God's Word.

“This is interesting, thank you. But it doesn't concern me. I don't buy that evolution stuff,” you say. But this issue is vastly more than just billions of years and Darwinism. Satan's, “Yea, hath God said?” (that is, “Did God *really* say . . .?”), saturates today's churches, even our evangelical ones. Our leaders deny a global Flood. We welcome women pastors and gay elders and pastors. We want to live according to our own standards, values, ideals, and beliefs, keeping God and His Word safely relegated to Sunday mornings where we offer Him lip service. We have no intention of knowing His Word, certainly not living it.

Do we lovingly forgive other believers for their lapses into sin, or for their ever-present stupidities? No way. We much prefer outrage. Pride controls us because it's more satisfying than humility. We're critical of others, we ignore their needs, we desire what the world puts on offer, and we eschew self-sacrifice. We do anything and everything with our life *except* obey Christ's one

commission to His Church, which is to share the Gospel with unbelievers. The Word of God has become like a great painting, a work of art hanging in a museum. We love to look at it and marvel at its greatness, but we leave the museum unchanged. It didn't much matter that we experienced that painting.

All modernity (yes, in its totality) is a farce. It is wickedness. And so it's condemned, although by God's grace the judgment is delayed. And unbelievers are also condemned for their participation in it, for their indifference to the Son whom God has lovingly and selflessly provided as an escape from the coming judgment. And though I regret to say this, I don't see any difference in the Church. Our participation in Satan's project of independence from God's Word is appalling.

There's a story about a supposedly mad patient explaining to a psychiatrist why he refuses to go to a picnic. "I might get food poisoning. I might get bitten by a poisonous snake in the grass. I might get killed in a car crash on the way to the picnic." The psychiatrist was speechless. The man was of course right. He understood reality perfectly, so he wasn't mad. Yet . . . what's normal? It's all the "normal" people who go on picnics who refuse to face reality. "Normal" people use all manner of defenses to protect against reality. It's the "normal" people who are mad. And it's the same with evangelicals! The true reality is, we're all going to have to stand before a holy, transcendent God one day to give account for our lives, for our glib words, for our godless thoughts and motives, for the waste of the time allotted to us and for our indifference to others. And for our listening thoughtlessly, carelessly to Satan's subtle deceitfulness. Yet, we ignore that reality, or we put in place all manner of defenses to protect against that reality. Madness!

Reality, after all, is what God says it is. He has revealed what reality is in His Word. Let me rephrase this, it's so important: Reality is what's written in the Scriptures. Reality is NOT what Satan (or our godless culture) places before us, which we (falsely) assume to be reality. And Satan's ultimate ploy is to convince us that his "reality" is the real reality so that we can be oblivious to God's reality. "Did God really say?" Satan mutters in our ears, and we foolishly answer in the depth of our souls, "Oh it's there in Scripture; and our church has it as a doctrine; and, yes, I believe it's true, but . . . hey, it's not for me. I have my life to live." Satan wins. Madness.

For example, Jesus said, "Unless you deny yourself, you cannot follow Me." Self-denial, the very essence of Christ-likeness, constitutes the reality of being a Christian. Satan says, "Did Jesus really say that? Did Jesus really *mean* that? Of course not. What Jesus said can be ignored." And so Christianity [if I can call it that] in America consists of myriads of people who agree with Satan and refuse to deny self yet expect to receive all the benefits on offer in the Gospel. Countless other examples could be cited. Scripture doesn't control us, because we don't think it has to. God's Word is "truth" that makes no demands, an "authority" that can be ignored. Madness.

What's the problem? It isn't the overwhelming power or cunning of Satan, because God has graciously given us the ability to defeat him (Ephesians 6:10-18). The problem is *us*. We've re-defined belief so that it's merely a matter of agreeing with biblical propositions, a matter of the mind, a matter of cognition. That's not biblical belief. Satan knows all those biblical propositions too, but he doesn't allow them to change him. And neither do we.

Biblical belief involves the entire person, not just the mind but the will and the desires as well. As a result of biblical belief, we have a new heart, one that desires to know and to be with God, and to be like Him. It results in a new will, one that commits to obeying the One we love. So, biblical belief is transformative. It results in love, trust, obedience and commitment. It results in Christ-

likeness and holiness. If it doesn't, then regardless what profession is made, regardless what claim is made, regardless what Bible verses or theology we may utter, biblical belief, that is, saving faith isn't there. So when Satan tempts us with, "Hath God said?" we agree with him that whatever God may have said in the Bible doesn't matter.

Yes, it's possible to fail, to lapse, to be imperfect. God is good, and Jesus is continually interceding for us. If there's a prior commitment to God and to His will and His Word, the indwelling Spirit will turn us around, to teach us to strive for maturity. But the Spirit can be grieved and quenched. We dare not be hard-hearted in our relationship with God.

Let's try now to understand what Satan really means when he says, "Yea, hath God said?" Perhaps (only *perhaps*) if we grasp this, it'll help us to avoid his subtle temptations. God speaks truth. Truth isn't something abstract or theoretical that we apply in certain situations. That's a popular, or secular understanding of truth. Truth is everything in the Bible, including not only its theology and statements about that which is spiritual, but its entire worldview, its moral standards, its commands, promises, and precepts for righteous living. God expects us to live out all these truths. We're here not to merely know truth, as if it were a mathematical theorem, but to engage it, sensitively reflect on it, absorb it into our lives and then obediently, submissively, lovingly live it. But Satan says, "No! Don't do that!"

So Satan slyly impugns God's words. He alleges that God won't really enforce His will, or His commands and threats. He influences us to be indifferent about, or to ignore, God's words. If we fail in some way and offend the Spirit, Satan whispers, "So what!" What we therefore need, desperately need, living as we are in a world controlled by Satan, is a fresh, radical understanding that truth – biblical truth – demands a radically committed life in God's presence. Absent this, all is vanity and waste; it's madness.

Something else, something important. In the reality that God has created, love means sacrifice of self for the person being loved. That's true since the opening chapters of Genesis. There's no worship without sacrifice. There's no sanctification without self-sacrifice. There's no serving God without it. There's no trust, no commitment, and no Christ-likeness without it. Loving, humble self-sacrifice is how Jesus defeated Satan. And loving, humble self-sacrifice is how we not only also defeat Satan but how we glorify God.

I can almost hear someone protesting: "Look, I have already made the one big decision in life, the really big thing. I've trusted Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. All the rest, whatever is in the Bible, is interesting information, but it's small stuff in comparison and probably irrelevant." And to this I reply, "Satan has got you!"

God has so identified with His Word that our attitude toward the Word of God is our attitude toward God Himself. Indifference to the Word is therefore deadly. If we love God, we love Him *through* the Word, or we don't really love Him. Satan's attack on the Word is therefore subtly an attack on God Himself, and if/when we yield to Satan and ignore the Word, we join Satan in showing contempt for God.

Jesus said, "**The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life**" (John 6:63b). Ignoring and/or disobeying Jesus' words means also repudiating the new life that's on offer in the Gospel. It repudiates the justification, the adoption, the indwelling Spirit, indeed all that constitutes salvation. Satan knows exactly what he's doing. Beware!