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THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES IN GENESIS

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Theological Difficulties in Genesis

Passage	Difficulty in Question with Explanation	Additional Notes
Gen 1	Some argue for millions and millions of years of history. Just as God created Adam as an adult, he also created the earth with age. Further, God can adjust any law of nature, such as the speed of light (Is 40:22).	In Canada, there was a sudden explosion of fossils without the in-between years of developing life—which strongly opposes evolution.
Gen 1-2	Some may say that the creation accounts of Gen 1 & 2 are different. The chronology of the main creation account is in Genesis 1, whereas chapter 2 is developed from chapter 1 with more detail, but with no contradictions. Vocabulary and literary style remain the same.	Chapter two develops chapter one. For example, Adam and Eve were both created in chapter 1, but in chapter 2, we see how Adam fell into a deep sleep, after which God took one of Adam's ribs to create Eve.
Gen 1-2	So exactly how long were the six days of creation? Each day was 24 hours. Genesis 1:5 spells out the length of a day in the creation, as in the first evening and the first morning being one day.	The Hebrew word for day יום (yom) can be used in the context of a 24-hour period of time or a time period as in the use of the term in Isaiah 19:18.
Gen 1-2	It has been argued because the word God אלהים in Gen 1 differs from God יהוה in Gen 2 that there were two different authors for the two chapters. However, even with chapter 2:1-3 being introduced with Elohim alone, Yahweh is used later, but always with Elohim behind it.	While there is something of an argument regarding the two chapters, truth be known, the chapter divisions didn't come about until 1227. Verses came along in 1551 and 1571. Also, there is no JEDP.
Gen 1:26	The purpose of God's creation of man is found in Isaiah 43:7, which was to promote his own glory. People who don't glorify God are not fulfilled as they can be. Eph 2:7 serves as an excellent CF in the purpose of God's creation of man, i.e. to share his grace forever!	Since God knew that man would sin and the sheer number of people who would not be saved, why did he still create man? Salvation is provided. There's no need to chase for answers that haven't been revealed.
Gen 1:26	We aren't specifically told what the "image of God" is comprised of. Angels and animals did not receive this aspect.	It most certainly played a role in how much God loves us. Christ loved us enough to give his life (John 15:13).

For a thorough discussion on the difficulties in the Bible, consult Gleason Archer's "Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties."

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Gen 2:2	Did God rest because he was tired? The meaning is that he ceased from his work (Ex 20:11), in which he was very satisfied (Gen 1:31).	Did God do nothing on the seventh day? The creation was complete, but he still oversaw the universe.
Gen 2:16-17	God told Adam that the day that he would eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would die (Gen 3:6-7). What exactly was this death comprised of? While that death did include the physical aspect, the main death in question was that of spiritual death, which took place immediately. Adam would live to be 930 years of age (Gen 5:5).	While spiritual death and physical death are often related, but from the big picture, there is a huge difference. Since Adam's sin, all (Rom 5:12) are born into sin (Psalm 51:5), which argues all the more for the need of people everywhere to be saved.
Gen 3:6	There's the issue of the salvation of Adam and Eve. After their sin and pointing the blame on another, both would have been in the lost state. While it is true that their getting saved isn't recorded, there is record that Adam would have taught his sons about the sacrifices (Gen 4:3-4), which in turn is indicative of his own spiritual state.	Sometimes, it appears to be a mystery as to who is saved. A faithful church member is found guilty of murder. An evangelist denounces the Christian faith. Before they were found out, who would have known of their spiritual state? The Lord knows who are his.
Gen 3:9-11	Why did God act like he didn't know that Adam was naked? God being omniscient knew of Adam's whereabouts (Ps. 139:2-3), but God is a personality who thinks, make decisions, and has conversation.	It's true that God knows everything (Acts 15:18), but he also has a personality who engages with other personalities.
Gen 3:15	God's faithfulness to his plan and design becomes evident, even after the fall of man took place. The Gen 3:15 passage, the first time the promise of a redeemer surfaces, speaks of the work of Christ and the devil. Around 4000 years would pass before Christ would begin his fatal blow (Heb 2:14) on the devil's head (Rev 20:10). Christ's wound on the heel would be temporary as he was raised again from the dead.	The prophets desperately tried to understand (Matt 13:17) the Messianic prophecies (1 Pet 1:10), but only with revelation from heaven could salvation in Christ would be understood better. This is progressive revelation. Had the villains understood what they were doing, they would not have crucified Christ (1 Co 2:8).

Handling difficult passages will sharpen your skill as an expositor.

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Gen 4:5	It's clear that God was not happy with Cain and his offering, but it isn't clear whether the issue is with Cain's attitude or with the actual offering. Hebrews 11:4 clears up that it was through faith that Abel had a better sacrifice.	Even if the issue was the type of sacrifice, the main issue still was Cain's heart. Cain never sought to make amends. Little sins led to bigger sins, which led to murder.
Gen 4:17	Who did Cain marry? His sister.	The seed of humanity lost purity over time (Lev 20:17).
Gen 5:5	How did Adam live to be 930 years of age? In the beginning, time was calculated the same as today, but living conditions, simply put, were better than today. The flood marked the end of that long life.	If you make it to seventy, you are doing good (Psalm 90:10). One's treatment of one's parents plays a role in the length of one's lifespan (Eph 6:2).
Gen 6:1-7	The most absurd view on the sons of God in Gen 6 is far easier to prove exegetically than the other views. The Hebrew words for "Sons of God" בני־האלהים in the Job (1:6; 2:1; 38:7) cross references, which are angels, are the same as in Genesis 6:1-7. The unpopular view of fallen angels procreating with women is supported by cross references.	The thing not to do is take a passage like Genesis 6:2 and base a major doctrine on it. Furthermore, the angels in Jude 6 are even presently bound, which proves they sinned even more after their initial fall, which could very well be their sin in Gen 6.
Gen 6:6-7 Part 1	It wasn't God who sinned. Man did. The Genesis 6:6 passage proves God thinks, feels, and make decisions just as man does, but on a much larger scale. God knew before the creation that man would sin, and who would be saved (Eph 1:4).	Man lies, not God (Num 23:19). While God is one to relieve punishment (Gen 4:15; Jonah 3:10), he is not one to turn from the original plan (Rom 11:29). He works everything out to bring his will to fruition.
Gen 6:6-7 Part 2	How could God repent in creating mankind? While it is true that God is a perfectly, omniscient God, he is also capable of emotion just as humans are. He was seriously grieved at the state of man. The God of the Bible is a person, and he makes decisions and experiences emotion just as we do. However, he is also a completely holy and just God.	Man changed, not God. A change from man will also bring about a different move from God. More times than not, a different move from God will be for the better for man. God had mercy on Jonah, and God lessened the punishment on Israel (II Sam 24:16).

God may put difficult passages in the Bible on purpose to make us study harder.

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Gen 6:19 & Gen 7:2	There appears to be a contradiction with the commandment to take in the animals in pairs, male and female, but in 7:2, he was to take in the clean animals by sevens. In Genesis 8:20, Noah needed extra animals for sacrifices.	Adam would have kept up the sacrifices. Abel did until his death, and from Gen 8:20, we find that Noah did. Apparently, the others didn't, even though they should have known about it.
Gen 7:19	In the vernacular, this means that the water level of the flood would have been approx. 30 feet higher than the highest mountain peak.	After God began to make unconditional covenants with man, man received much more grace from heaven.
Gen 7:22	Genesis 7:22 indicates that the flood destroyed all life on dry land.	The ark did not carry fish and the like.
Gen 9:4	In this passage, God instructs Noah not to consume any blood. Yet, numerous passages specifically speak of drinking blood, and two, how does this work with the New Testament? The invitation to drink blood in Ezekiel 39:19 is given to the birds and animals in 39:17.	In John 6:53-55, Jesus spoke of drinking his blood in order to get to heaven, but this was never done by anyone. He was speaking figuratively. Acts 15:20 instructs believers not to consume blood.
Gen 10:5 & Gen 11:9	The confounding of the languages didn't take place until the tower of Babel, but there is record of different languages in Genesis 10:5, 20, & 31. Chapter 10 simply covered a broader space of time.	There is no record on whether the original language was preserved or not. Rather than speculating, let's just leave it at that.
Gen 15:6	Questions on how men were saved in the Old Testament begins in the book of Genesis. Faith and repentance are absolute musts in getting saved without the assistance of works (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:5).	There's record of Cain and Abel presenting offerings to God, but these would have been types of the perfect sacrifice in Christ with Christ being the antitype.
Gen 18:1-2	Theophanies in the OT are when Jesus manifested himself to man before his incarnation in the New Testament. Mankind cannot face God the Father (Exo 33:20, 23) without dying (1 John 4:12), which helps us understand who the Lord God is in the Old Testament (e.g. Josh 5:13-15; This was Jesus). The man in the Gen 18, Jesus, faced Abraham, and he received worship from Abraham.	Jesus faced many people, the saved and unsaved, during his time on the earth. Jesus, who is God (John 20:28; Micah 5:2), received worship (Heb 1:6) many times during his time on the earth (Matt 2:11), and in Revelation 22:8-9, an angel specifically states that only God can receive worship.

Thorough research in commentaries and apologetical books will get most difficulties resolved.

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Gn 12:13	Despite Abraham lying about Sarah, God still blessed him. Gleason Archer argues that the long wait for the son of promise may have been partially due to his lying.	Abraham and Sarah did share a father (Gen 20:12). Rahab still made it into the hall of faith (Heb 11:31).
Gn 15:17	The Bible employs such language as the sun going down and rising again, but this type of language is accepted in languages all across history. The Bible is first God's Word, but is scientifically accurate.	Isaiah 40:22 speaks of the earth as a sphere. Job 26:7 speaks of the earth's suspension in space before modern technology figured it out.
Gn 19:23		
Gn 17:11	Circumcision was commanded for the boys, but nothing for the girls. Circumcision was a sign, but it was not a requirement for salvation.	Circumcision could not save (Romans 2:25-29), but all need to be circumcised in the heart (Deut 10:16).
Gen 22:2	While the OT forbids human sacrifice to foreign gods (Lev 18:21), the OT isn't clear on human sacrifice. Isaac (Gen 22:12) and Jephthah (Judg 11:31, 38-39) did not end up as burnt offerings.	Jesus would become a human sacrifice (Isa 53:10, 12). The king of Moab offered up his son as a burnt offering without a clear response from God on the matter (II Kings 3:27).
Gn 25:1	The first passage declares Keturah to be Abraham's wife while the second passage addresses her as a concubine. Keturah was <i>not</i> Abraham's primary wife, which was given to Sarah.	Sarah was the mother of the son of promise, Isaac. Some say that Keturah would have been some sort of a secondary wife.
I Ch 1:32		
Gn 29:27	After marrying Leah, Jacob only waited one week before marrying Rachael. Verses 27-30 support this argument.	
Gen 31	Despite Jacob's deception and Rachel's deception concerning the idols, God still blessed them. Jacob acknowledged a hard life (47:9).	Rachel ended up dying in Genesis 35:18, which was shortly thereafter, probably due to having idols.
Gen 49:10	This passage claims that Judah would be in authority until the arrival of the Messiah. One, Judah kept a certain amount of authority in Israel up until Jesus' coming. Two, Jerusalem seems to stay intact until Christ's arrival (Ezek. 21:27). Three, the Holy Land lay desolate for around 1800 years after 70 AD.	Looking at 3000 years of history in the Holy Land helps authenticate this verse. After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Israel was basically devoid of any real Jewish authority until 1948, which was when modern Israel was formed.

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Works Consulted; Adam Clarke; Albert Barnes; John Gill; Gleason Archer (main contributing source); The Ryrie Study Bible.

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