

Accurately Handling the Word of Truth

Challenging Passages #2: Genesis 1:1-2

Key Questions about Genesis 1:1-2

Top-Down Questions

1. What is the book of Genesis about?
2. Who was the human author of Genesis? What was his mission? When did he live?
3. Who was the original audience for the book of Genesis?
4. What is the family of books that Genesis is a member of? What was their purpose, role and function?
5. Why did the LORD God cause the book of Genesis to be written?
6. Where does the book of Genesis begin? Where does it end?
7. What kind of literature is Genesis? [epistle, prophecy, Law, narrative, poetry...] How does the kind of literature effect the interpretation of a passage? In what ways is Genesis unique among other books of this kind in the Bible?
8. What does the book of Genesis reveal about the Lord Jesus Christ?
9. What is the whole Bible about? Genesis is the first book of the Bible, and this is the first passage in Genesis. How does that provide perspective on the meaning?
10. What is the last book of the Bible? Is it about the future and the ending of the story of the Bible? How can the last book of the Bible and how it ends help us interpret the first book of the Bible and how it begins?
11. Why is Genesis 1:1-2 important?
12. What is the "issue" about Genesis 1:1-2?
13. What are the several different interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2 that we ought to consider in deciding the meaning?
14. What other passages of Scripture shed light on this passage and its meaning?
15. What difference does it make which interpretation we accept?
16. Why is Genesis 1 being scrutinized so much in our time?
17. Should we let scientific theories and discoveries influence how we interpret Genesis?
18. Does it matter if someone works to make science fit the Bible, rather than making the Bible fit science?
19. Are there any theological doctrines that only work if a certain interpretation of the passage is accepted? What are they?
20. Should our beliefs about them influence our interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2?

Bottom-Up Questions

1. What does the Hebrew for “in the beginning” mean?
2. Where else in the Old Testament is that used, and how is it used there?
3. What does the Hebrew for “created” mean?
4. Where else in the book of Genesis is that Hebrew word used?
5. What does the expression “the heavens and the earth” refer to? Is it one entity or two separate entities? Should “heavens” be plural, or singular (Heaven)? Where else in Genesis do these words also appear?
6. Where else in the Bible are the heavens and the earth spoken of together?
7. Do different interpretations of Genesis 1 require a particular translation of Genesis 1:1-2? Which ones?
8. One particular theory relies on the first part of Genesis 1:2 being translated “But the earth became formless and void”. What support for that translation exists ?
9. What is the Hebrew for “formless” ? “void”? What do these words mean? Where else do they appear in the Old Testament? What do these other passages provide by way of helping us interpret Genesis 1:1-2?
10. Are the phrases “formless and void”, “darkness” , and “the deep” morally neutral, or do they convey evil and judgment? What difference does this make in the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2?