

Resolved by NMSR: Biblical Inconsistencies rule out a Literal Interpretation of the Genesis Creation Story.

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This is Essay 6A in the NMSR/CSFNM Debate Series.

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NMSR has no quarrel with those who believe that the Bible is a wonderful and spiritual book, nor with those who use literal readings of the scriptures to extract spiritual messages and meanings. However, we do not agree with CSFNM that the Bible is "historically and scientifically accurate and without error," that "Genesis is a factual presentation of simple historical Truths," and that "The great flood described in Genesis, commonly called Noah's Flood, was a historical event, worldwide in its extent and effects."

If a text is literally true, then every single passage contained therein must be true. Also, any statement which is literally true *should mean exactly what it says*. "Literal Truths" should be clear to everyone, and should not need to be defended or explained with liberal "interpretations."

One does not have to look far to find Biblical passages that are *not* consistent with each other. Clearly, at most one of two such conflicting passages can be true, and at least one of the passages must be *false*. Only one such contradiction is required to disprove the claim that Genesis and the Bible as a whole are literally true throughout. Here is one such example: Genesis 11:26 describes how Abraham's father, Terah, was 70 years old at the time of Abraham's birth. Genesis 11:32 tells how Terah died in Ha'ran, at the ripe old age of 205. In the very next verse, Genesis 12:1, the Lord tells Abraham to leave his late father's house to seek out a new land. But three verses later, in Genesis 12:4, we are told that Abraham was but 75 years old when he left Ha'ran to go to Canaan.

Adding 70 (Terah's age at Abraham's birth) to 75 (Abraham's age at Terah's death) yields a sum of 145 years for Terah's age, in direct conflict with the figure of 205 years given in Genesis 11:32. Confirmation that Abraham left Ha'ran after the death of his father appears in the New Testament, in Acts 7:4.

This is a serious problem. 70 plus 75 equals 145, **NOT** 205.

The Bible is not a science textbook, nor a biology textbook, nor a geology textbook. Indeed, we have just seen that the Bible includes arithmetic that would not pass muster in New Mexico's elementary school classrooms.

Although only one example is required to disprove the assertion that Genesis is literally true, and that example has already been provided, numerous other contradictions have been described over the years. Genesis 1:25-26 states that animals were created before man, but Genesis 2:18-19 states that man was created first, and animals later. In Genesis 6:19, the Lord tells Noah to take two (one male and one female) of *every living thing* aboard the ark, but in Genesis 7:2, Noah is commanded to take seven males and seven females of each of the "clean" beasts aboard the ark. One can legitimately wonder how

Noah was supposed to know which animals were "clean," since the dietary laws listed in Leviticus were given to Moses many, many years after the days of Noah. Even so, it is obvious that fourteen (twice seven) is not the same number as two, and thus another clear contradiction has been provided.

Genesis 6:4 describes the Nephilim, the "Giants" of the days before Noah. The Hebrew word for these giants, *nef-eel*' (Strong's concordance 05303, using James Strong's numbers (1890) [1]) appears in only one other verse of the Bible, and that verse is Numbers 13:33. The contradiction here is that the "giants" mentioned in Genesis 6:4 clearly lived before the Great Flood, and we can presume that they all perished along with every other creature or human not aboard the ark during the deluge. The only humans aboard the ark were Noah and his family, and no mention is made of "giants" along for the year-long voyage. But in Numbers 13:33, we learn that some of the giants must have survived the flood *outside* the ark, since Moses's lieutenants actually saw them, and warned Moses against attacking them.

Many Biblical inconsistencies are very difficult to resolve, and careful study of the original Hebrew text only worsens the problem. For example, *'erets* [Strong's Concordance # 0776], the word for "the earth," appears in Genesis 8:9, in the phrase "the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth." This verse is often interpreted as meaning the Flood covered the entire planet. Yet, this same word, *'erets*, can also refer to tribal territory, or a specific district or region. In Genesis 50:8, *'erets* refers to the land of Goshen; in Genesis 50:13, to the land of Canaan. The word "*'erets*" can mean many things, and its use in Genesis 8:9 is not conclusive evidence of a world-wide Flood.

There are far too many contradictions in the Bible to cover in a mere 1000-word essay. Does the Bible say the Flood took five months to subside and reveal the land (150 days, Genesis 8:3) or does it say it took twice as long, ten months (Genesis 8:5)?

There are far more interpretations of scripture than the strict beliefs of young-earth creationists. One Christian creationist [web site](#) lists almost a dozen verses of the Bible that mention "stretching out of the heavens," which the author interprets as a description of the Big Bang [2] [for example, Job 9:8, "Which alone spreadeth out the heavens..."]. Indeed, one can even cite scripture in support of natural selection: "For many are called, but few *are* chosen." (Matthew 22:14).

We recommend to CSFNM the sage advice of St. Augustine: "If they [the infidel] find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages are full of falsehoods and on facts which they themselves have learnt from experience and the light of reason?" [3]

REFERENCES (not part of word count)

[1] The Blue Letter Bible, <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/>>

[2] Richard L. Deem, "Day-Age Genesis One Interpretation," <<https://web.archive.org/web/20040603171534/http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/day-age.html>> See also <<https://web.archive.org/web/20030301015711/http://www.godandscience.org/youngearth/>>

[3] Augustine's The Literal Meaning of Genesis: An Unfinished Book, , written in AD 401
<<https://web.archive.org/web/20000620225237/http://solon.cma.univie.ac.at/~neum/christ/creation.html>>, <<https://web.archive.org/web/19990219135024/https://www.balancedscorecard.org/bridges/ASA/Augustine1.html>>

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