

Introduction to Volume Seven

This seventh volume of *Concise Studies in the Scriptures* deals with the biblical and secular studies concerning the ages of mankind, the Earth, and the universe.

Sadly, Christians sometimes fall out with each other over such issues as how long ago did God create the universe – was it 6,000 years ago or was it millions of years ago? Or how long ago was mankind created – again was it 6,000 years ago, or an undetermined but limited thousands of years ago, or millions of years ago? Was the flood in Noah’s time a global deluge or regional or was it just a local event. Although we believe that good scholarship can result in a correct or reasonable understanding of these issues, it is our opinion that such issues are not such that concern salvation and should not be allowed to cloud the more important matters for Christians of understanding: the identity God, the identity and origin of Jesus, what both God and Jesus have done for us, what makes for the Christian life, and what God’s purpose is for mankind and for the Christian personally. Yet obviously the main factors in these early Bible accounts are fundamental to Christianity, such as Adam’s fall into sin and so the need for a redeemer, and the destruction of all the wicked in Noah’s time, as showing God’s view of wickedness.

Nevertheless, in modern-times, there is a concerted attack against the Christian faith from atheistically minded people who often use the pseudo-science of biological evolution in their attack. So it is important for the Christian to know whether or not God describes his creation in terms of biological evolution or direct creation. Because some Christians come down on the side of the former view i.e. biological evolution, we have to ask if one can really be a Bible believer and at the same time think that the creator used evolution as the process of creation? Such people must turn the early chapters of the book of Genesis into allegory as does the Roman Catholic Church according to their notes on Genesis in the New American Bible. Yet we feel that such a method does not do justice to the biblical text, which, although using some figurative language, is to be understood as literal narrative.

Additionally, and in more recent times, an attack against the Christian faith is coming from the world of the atheistically-minded people who present specious arguments as to why a creator could not exist or is unnecessary. These are not scientific arguments involving evolution, but are based on supposed logic. Such presented arguments are often incredibly complex and so the defence against them has had to be similarly complex. Our attempt to deal with these arguments is necessarily very limited and all we can do is recommend some of the books that demonstrate the faultiness of these arguments.

There are teachings and details which are very clearly stated in the Scriptures and about which one can be reasonably certain when the known background is taken into account. However, there are also many subjects that are not so clearly stated and requiring a lot of ‘digging’ to find the correct teaching and so making it advisable to be cautious as regards one’s being dogmatic. So the studies are presented as substantially completed works although still in progress as new information about the early centuries background is received.

❖ “Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish” (*Proverbs 18:13 NLT*).

Method of Presentation of the Material

Although, the earlier volumes of studies use a certain amount of logical reasoning and common sense, these studies on the ancient works of the Creator, because of their nature, attempt to use logical reasoning and common sense to a considerably greater degree. Yet, as in previous studies, the many Scriptures that have a bearing on each subject have been drawn together to make sense of the information. In doing all of this, the truth-seeker has to ensure that the reading of these texts is never taken out of context. So although these studies present mainly single or partial verses it is strongly recommended that the reader examine from his or her own Bible the context in which these verses are set. Of course, the reason for the single or partial verses is to focus on the point the text makes and hence to gain clarity. Also it is hoped that the sub-headings, the highlighted key words and the comments will help to connect the related information and act as a guide to bring out the teaching of the Bible on each subject. The approach taken here is to use the plainly understood texts as the basis to understand the more difficult texts and also to refer to the scholarly works. Although often dismissed by some truth-seekers, the work of Bible scholars can be very valuable toward gaining a correct understanding of Scripture. In fact, Jesus purposed to make such a provision when he said: “Therefore, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes (NKJV)” (Matthew 23:34). Such scribes were not public speakers with little scholarly background but, in Bible times, were a class of professional Bible scholars. We, too, need to take advantage of the up-to-date work of such professionals today. This helps in the areas of Bible translation, greater understanding of Jewish culture and ways of Jewish expression, more accurate definitions of Bible terms and analysis of the meanings in English. However, there is the warning for us to be discerning with such works.

