

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Doctrine of Humanity

Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God

UNIT 2

The Creation of Humanity

Lesson 6

Created, Not Evolved The Biblical Doctrine of Human Origins

“Affirming the Direct Creation of Humanity Against Every Form of Evolutionary Theory”

Key Texts: Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7, 21–22; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49; Acts 17:26

*“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin,
and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*

Romans 5:12, NASB 1995

Dr. Joshua Nichols

Pastor, Theologian, Author

faithfultotheword.com

Introduction

We arrive now at the capstone lesson of Unit 2, the lesson that draws together the exegetical, theological, and apologetic threads developed in Lessons 3 through 5 and states with the greatest explicitness what the series has been building toward since Lesson 1: that humanity was created, not evolved; that the direct, personal, immediate creative act of the living God is the only adequate account of human origins; and that no form of evolutionary theory, whether atheistic Darwinism or theistic accommodation, can be reconciled with the plain teaching of Scripture without doing damage to the doctrines upon which the gospel itself depends. This is not a lesson about science versus religion; it is a lesson about the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God as the final and normative account of everything it addresses, including the origin of the human creature.

The previous lessons of Unit 2 have laid the necessary groundwork. Lesson 3 established the special creation of Adam from the exegesis of Genesis 2:7: the *yatsar* of the potter, the *nishmat chayyim* of the divine breath, and the theological arguments against theistic evolution and for the historicity of Adam. Lesson 4 established the creation of Eve from Adam's side and the theological significance of her derivation from his body. Lesson 5 established the goodness of the material creation against both Gnosticism and materialism, with the Incarnation and the Resurrection as its supreme biblical affirmations. This lesson synthesizes all of these threads into a comprehensive statement of the biblical doctrine of human origins, engaging the specific claims of Darwinian evolution and theistic evolution with the full weight of the scriptural, theological, and presuppositional arguments required to meet them.

The lesson proceeds in six movements. We begin with the consolidated biblical testimony to the direct creation of humanity, surveying the key texts and their cumulative force. We then examine the presuppositional framework that underlies the debate between creation and evolution, arguing that the conflict is not fundamentally empirical but epistemological: it is a conflict between two different accounts of what counts as evidence and what kind of knowledge is possible. The third and fourth sections address Darwinian evolution and theistic evolution in turn, presenting the specific theological objections to each. The fifth section engages the scientific discussion directly, treating the limits of empirical science in addressing questions of ultimate origin and affirming both the legitimacy of creation science and the epistemological priority of special revelation. We close with the pastoral confidence that the Bible is not threatened by scientific inquiry, that the God who wrote the Scriptures and the God who created the universe are the same God, and that genuine knowledge of His world will never contradict genuine knowledge of His Word.

A word about the relationship between this lesson and Lesson 3 is in order. Some of the ground covered here overlaps with material treated in Lesson 3, particularly on the questions of the historicity of Adam and the theological stakes of theistic evolution. The overlap is intentional: Lesson 3 introduced these arguments in the context of the exegesis of Genesis 2:7, while Lesson 6 treats them as part of a more comprehensive apologetic engagement with the evolutionary hypothesis. The student who has worked through Lesson 3 carefully will find that the arguments of Lesson 6 deepen and extend what was established there, bringing additional biblical, theological, and presuppositional resources to bear on the question of human origins as a whole.

I. The Consolidated Biblical Testimony: Humanity Was Directly Created

A Survey of the Key Texts and Their Cumulative Theological Force

A. *Genesis 1–2: The Foundation and Its Consistent Witness*

The biblical testimony to the direct creation of humanity is not confined to a single proof text; it is woven throughout the entire fabric of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation in ways that demonstrate its structural centrality to the whole of biblical theology. The foundation, of course, is the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2. Genesis 1:26–27 establishes the fact of humanity’s creation in the image of God by divine decree: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ ... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (NASB 1995). The verb *bara* (ברא), used three times in these two verses for the creation of humanity, is the verb used throughout Genesis 1 for the uniquely divine act of bringing something new into existence, an act that has no creaturely analogue and that cannot be mediated by natural processes without ceasing to be what the text says it is. God does not guide a natural process that eventually produces image-bearers; He creates them, directly, in the culminating act of the creative week.

Genesis 2:7 provides the detailed account of Adam’s creation that was examined at length in Lesson 3: God forms (*yatsar*) man from the dust of the ground and breathes into him the breath of life, and man becomes a living being. Genesis 2:21–22 provides the parallel account of Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib, examined in Lesson 4. Together, these two accounts establish that both Adam and Eve were created by direct, personal, immediate divine acts, not by a process of gradual biological development but by specific creative actions performed by the living God on specific materials in a specific sequence. The narrative structure of Genesis 2, the naming of the animals, the deep sleep, the fashioned rib, the bringing of Eve to Adam, is not the structure of a theological framework that could be detached from historical reference; it is the structure of a narrative about events, and its historical character is the character of the rest of the Genesis narrative in which it is embedded.

The genealogical witness of Genesis 5 and 11 reinforces the historical character of the creation narrative by tracing a continuous line of descent from Adam to Noah to Abraham with the same kind of chronological specificity that characterizes the historical records of the ancient Near East. Genesis 5:1–2 opens its genealogy with a direct back-reference to the creation narrative: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.” The genealogy is explicitly anchored in the creative act of Genesis 1:26–27, treating Adam not as a mythological figure at the beginning of an indeterminate symbolic narrative but as a historical individual whose descendants are historical individuals traceable by name, age, and relationship. The genealogical witness cannot be detached from the creation narrative without destroying the historical framework that the genealogies themselves presuppose.

B. *The New Testament’s Consistent Witness to a Historical Creation*

The New Testament’s engagement with the creation of humanity is not the engagement of writers who regard the Genesis accounts as theologically rich but historically uncertain traditions from which timeless spiritual truths can be extracted while the historical framework is set aside. It is the engagement of writers who treat Genesis 1–2 as an account of what actually happened, whose historical details are relevant to the theological arguments they are making, and whose authority as Scripture is not diminished by the passage of time or the pressure of alternative cosmologies. Jesus’s appeal to the creation of male and female in Matthew 19:4–6, Paul’s argument from the creation order in 1 Timothy 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:8–9, Paul’s Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5:12–21, Paul’s reference to God making from one man every nation in Acts 17:26, Paul’s account of the first and last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49, and Luke’s genealogy of Jesus extending back to “Adam, the son of God” in Luke 3:38, all of these treatments of the Genesis creation narrative by New Testament authors presuppose its historical

character and draw theological conclusions from its historical details that cannot be preserved if the historical character is denied.

The Acts 17:26 text is particularly significant for the doctrine of human origins as a whole: “and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (NASB 1995). Paul’s proclamation to the Athenian philosophers affirms three things that evolutionary theory cannot accommodate: first, that all of humanity descends from a single individual man (ex henos, ἐξ ἑνός, from one); second, that this individual was not the product of a natural process but of a divine creative act (He made); and third, that the distribution of the nations across the face of the earth is not the result of unguided natural and cultural processes but of divine determination. This is the apostolic proclamation of the doctrine of human origins in the most cosmopolitan intellectual environment of the ancient world, offered not as an apologetic concession to a scientific consensus but as the counter-cultural proclamation of the living God against the autonomous philosophies of Athens. It is the model for the church’s engagement with the evolutionary consensus of the contemporary intellectual world.

The cumulative force of this biblical testimony, from Genesis through the Psalms through the Prophets through the Gospels through the Epistles, is not the force of a single proof text that might be read in isolation from its context; it is the force of a consistent, pervasive, and mutually reinforcing witness that the human race was directly created by the living God, that this creation was performed through specific divine acts performed on specific materials at a specific point in history, and that the historical character of this creation is presupposed by and essential to the entire theological structure of the biblical narrative from the garden of Eden to the new Jerusalem. To allow evolutionary theory to rewrite this testimony is not to update the church’s doctrine in light of new knowledge; it is to subordinate the authoritative Word of the Creator to the provisional findings of the creature, which is, as this series has argued from the beginning, precisely the epistemological inversion that the doctrine of the Creator-creature distinction forbids.

“And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.”

Acts 17:26, NASB 1995

II. The Presuppositional Framework: Why the Conflict Is Epistemological, Not Empirical

Understanding the Debate Between Creation and Evolution at Its Deepest Level

A. Methodological Naturalism and Its Limits

The most common popular understanding of the conflict between creation and evolution frames it as a conflict between science and religion, or between empirical evidence and dogmatic faith, in which the scientific evidence points clearly toward evolution and the only reason to resist that conclusion is a prior religious commitment to the authority of Scripture. This framing is itself a product of the presuppositional framework of methodological naturalism, the operating assumption, built into the practice of modern science, that natural causes are sufficient to explain all observed phenomena and that any explanation that appeals to supernatural agency falls outside the bounds of legitimate scientific inquiry. The presupposition of methodological naturalism is not a conclusion derived from empirical evidence; it is a prior commitment about what kinds of explanations are permissible, and it is a commitment that, once made, guarantees that no amount of evidence will ever point toward a supernatural Creator, because the rules of the game exclude supernatural conclusions before the game begins.

The Christian apologist who fails to identify this presuppositional structure will find himself in an impossible position: perpetually attempting to defeat an empirical argument on empirical grounds, while the real question, which is not empirical at all but epistemological, goes unaddressed. The question at issue between creation and evolution is not primarily: what does the fossil record show? It is: what kind of explanation is legitimate for the origin of the human race? And the answer to that question is not determined by looking at fossils; it is determined by prior commitments about the nature of knowledge, the limits of science, and the authority of Scripture. The Christian doctrine of creation does not conflict with genuine empirical science; it conflicts with the philosophical naturalism that has been imported into the practice of science as a methodological presupposition and then exported back out as a metaphysical conclusion. Distinguishing methodological naturalism (the operating assumption of scientific practice) from metaphysical naturalism (the philosophical conclusion that nature is all there is) is the first and most important apologetic move in engaging the evolutionary hypothesis.

The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing, by the word and power of God alone, without any pre-existing material, and the doctrine of the special creation of Adam from the dust of the ground by the direct personal act of God are, by definition, events that no empirical scientific method could have observed, recorded, or verified, because empirical science operates on the assumption of uniform natural processes and the creation events were unique, non-repeatable, supernatural interventions in the natural order. This does not make them less real or less knowable; it makes them the kind of events that are known through the testimony of the One who performed them, which is to say, through the revealed Word of God in Holy Scripture. The epistemological priority of special revelation over empirical science in the domain of ultimate origins is not a failure of intellectual nerve; it is the appropriate recognition that questions about the ultimate origin of the cosmos and the human race are not questions that empirical science is constitutionally equipped to answer, because they concern events that lie outside the domain of repeatable, observable, natural processes.

B. *Two Kinds of Science: Operational and Historical*

The distinction between operational science and historical science is a crucial apologetic tool for the engagement with evolutionary theory, and it is a distinction that the evolutionary consensus consistently obscures. Operational science, the science of repeatable, testable, observable phenomena in the present, is the science that produced the germ theory of disease, the transistor, the vaccine, and the periodic table. It is science at its most powerful and most reliable, and there is no conflict between operational science and the biblical doctrine of creation. The Christian who affirms the direct creation of humanity by God has no difficulty using a microscope, a calculator, or an airplane, and no difficulty affirming the validity of the scientific methods that produced them. The conflict between creation and evolution is not a conflict with operational science; it is a conflict with historical science, the extrapolation of present-day natural processes back in time to reconstruct events that occurred in the unobserved past.

Historical science, the attempt to reconstruct the unobserved past from present-day evidence using the assumption of uniform natural processes, is a legitimate and valuable intellectual enterprise, but it is epistemologically weaker than operational science in important ways that the evolutionary consensus tends to suppress. The conclusions of historical science are not verified by repeatable experiment; they are inferred from present-day evidence using models that assume the uniformity of natural processes across time. The fossil record, the genetic evidence for common descent, the radiometric dating methods used to establish the ages of geological formations, all of these are valuable sources of data about the natural world, but they are interpreted within a framework of assumptions about uniform natural processes, long timescales, and the absence of supernatural intervention that are not themselves empirically established but philosophically presupposed. Change the presuppositional framework, and the same evidence yields different conclusions. The Christian who approaches the fossil record, the genetic evidence, and the geological data within the presuppositional framework of the biblical doctrine of creation, who assumes the reality of the worldwide flood of Genesis 6–9, the young age of the earth established by the genealogies, and the direct creation of distinct kinds of creatures by the living God, will

interpret that evidence differently, not because the evidence itself demands different interpretation but because the presuppositional framework within which it is interpreted is different.

The presuppositional approach does not require the Christian to deny the existence or validity of the empirical evidence for evolution; it requires the Christian to recognize that the evidence does not speak for itself but is always interpreted within a prior framework of assumptions, and that the framework of assumptions built into the evolutionary consensus, the assumption of uniform natural processes, the assumption of vast timescales, the assumption of the sufficiency of natural causes, is not dictated by the evidence but brought to the evidence from outside it. The Christian's alternative framework, built on the authority of the inerrant, infallible, sufficient Word of God as the starting point for all knowledge, including knowledge of the past, is not less rigorous than the evolutionary framework; it is differently grounded, and its different grounding produces different conclusions about the origin of the human race. The question is not whether to have a presuppositional framework but which presuppositional framework is most adequately grounded in the nature of reality, and the Christian's answer, consistently applied, is that the framework grounded in the Word of the God who was actually present at the creation of the world is more adequately grounded than the framework built on the assumption that no such God exists or that His Word is not authoritative.

III. Against Darwinian Evolution: The Theological Case

Why the Theory of Common Descent Is Incompatible with the Biblical Account of Human Origins

A. *Common Descent and the Unity of the Human Race*

The theory of common descent, the central claim of Darwinian evolution, holds that all living organisms, including human beings, are descended from a common ancestor through a process of unguided natural selection acting on random genetic mutation over vast periods of time. Applied to the origin of humanity, this theory holds that *Homo sapiens* is not a specially created species but one branch of the primate family tree, sharing common ancestors with chimpanzees and other great apes, and that the cognitive, moral, and spiritual capacities that distinguish human beings from other animals are the product of natural selection rather than the direct creative act of God. This account of human origins is incompatible with the biblical doctrine of special creation at every point: it denies the direct creative act of God, it denies the distinction between humanity and the rest of the animal kingdom as creatures made in the image of God, it denies the historicity of Adam as the specially created first man, and it denies the unity of the human race under a single federal head.

The biblical affirmation of the unity of the human race under Adam is particularly important in the context of the evolutionary hypothesis, and it is an affirmation that the evolutionary account cannot accommodate. Acts 17:26 declares that God made from one man every nation of mankind, a statement of monogenism (the descent of the entire human race from a single individual) that the evolutionary account replaces with polygenism (the emergence of the human species through a population of evolving hominids rather than a single specially created pair). The theological stakes of this distinction are not merely genealogical; they are soteriological. Paul's argument in Romans 5:12–21 depends on the monogenistic premise: the many are constituted sinners through the disobedience of the one man because the one man was the federal representative of all who descend from him by natural generation. If humanity did not descend from a single individual but from a population of evolving hominids, the federal structure of Romans 5 is without historical grounding, and the parallel between Adam's representational disobedience and Christ's representational obedience collapses. You cannot maintain the federal structure of the gospel while surrendering the monogenistic premise of human origins.

The evolutionary account of human origins also generates a problem for the doctrine of the *imago Dei* that no theological accommodation has successfully resolved. If the capacities that distinguish human beings from other animals, rationality, moral agency, the capacity for worship, the ability to form language and culture and relationship, are the product of unguided natural selection, then they are adaptations that conferred reproductive

advantages on the organisms that possessed them, and their significance is exhausted by their biological function. The image of God, on the evolutionary account, is either a theological interpretation imposed on a biological reality (in which case it has no ontological grounding in the actual constitution of the human creature) or a supernatural addition made at some point in the evolutionary process to a biological entity that had already achieved sufficient neural complexity (in which case the image of God is not constitutive of humanity as such but a divine supplement to a pre-existing hominid). Neither alternative honors the plain teaching of Genesis 1:26–27 that God created humanity in His own image by direct divine decree, or the theological tradition’s understanding that the *imago Dei* is not an optional addition to human nature but its defining characteristic from the first moment of creation.

B. *Natural Selection, Random Mutation, and the Image of God*

The mechanism of Darwinian evolution, random genetic mutation filtered by natural selection, is not merely in tension with the biblical account of special creation; it is, as a comprehensive account of the origin of the human race, fundamentally incompatible with the theological affirmations that the biblical account requires. Natural selection is an undirected process: it does not aim at any outcome, it has no goal, it selects for reproductive fitness in a given environment without any reference to purpose, meaning, or divine intention. The human being produced by natural selection is not made for anything beyond the survival and reproduction of the biological organism; it has no telos, no inherent dignity, no accountability before any authority beyond the blind forces of natural selection that produced it. This is not a caricature of evolutionary theory; it is the straightforward implication of the theory as its most serious proponents understand it. Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Steven Pinker have each argued with considerable clarity that the evolutionary account of human origins implies the absence of any transcendent purpose, dignity, or moral accountability in the human creature, and their willingness to follow the logic of evolutionary theory to its conclusion is more intellectually honest than the evangelical attempts to baptize evolution while retaining the theological conclusions that the evolutionary account undermines.

The attempt to reconcile the mechanism of natural selection with the theological claim that the human creature is made in the image of God for the purpose of knowing and glorifying its Creator requires the Christian evolutionist to maintain simultaneously that the process which produced the human creature was undirected and purposeless and that the creature produced by that process has a directed and purposeful existence before a God who made it for Himself. This is not a coherent position; it is a theological assertion layered on top of a philosophical framework that makes the assertion impossible. The God who declares “Let Us make man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26) is not a God who initiates an undirected process and then waits to see what emerges; He is the God who creates purposefully, specifically, and immediately, the God whose declaration in Genesis 1:26 is followed immediately by the creation event of Genesis 1:27, with no room in the text for the insertion of a billion-year evolutionary process between the divine intention and its fulfillment. Natural selection and the image of God are not complementary accounts of the same reality; they are competing accounts of where the human creature comes from and what it is for.

The problem of animal death before the fall is a further theological objection to Darwinian evolution that deserves mention. The evolutionary account of the development of life on earth requires billions of years of animal suffering, death, and extinction as the mechanism by which more complex organisms developed from simpler ones. But the biblical narrative places the entrance of death into the created order at a specific historical point, the fall of Adam in Genesis 3, and Paul’s argument in Romans 5:12–14 and 8:20–22 explicitly connects the subjection of the creation to futility and decay with Adam’s transgression rather than with the pre-fall operation of natural processes. If the evolutionary account is correct, then billions of years of death and suffering preceded the fall, which means that death is not the consequence of sin but a feature of the pre-fall created order, a conclusion that devastates the Pauline argument that Christ’s death and resurrection reverse what Adam’s sin

introduced. The death of Christ is the solution to the problem of death; if death is not a problem introduced by sin but a feature of creation from the beginning, then the death of Christ has no solution to provide.

IV. Against Theistic Evolution: Why Accommodation Fails

The Theological Costs of Attempting to Harmonize Scripture and Evolutionary Theory

A. *The Inevitable Surrender of the Historical Adam*

Theistic evolution, the attempt to affirm both the authority of Scripture and the truth of evolutionary biology by interpreting the Genesis creation accounts as theological narratives rather than historical descriptions, is the most sophisticated and the most theologically serious attempt to accommodate the Christian doctrine of creation to the evolutionary consensus. Its proponents, associated with organizations like BioLogos, with scholars like Francis Collins, Peter Enns, and John Walton, and with theologians who regard the Young-Earth position as an intellectual embarrassment to the church, are in many cases genuinely committed to the authority of Scripture and genuinely concerned about the church's credibility in the face of the scientific consensus. Their motivations deserve to be taken seriously. But the theological costs of their accommodation are, on examination, far higher than they acknowledge, and the primary cost is the one that this series has returned to repeatedly: the surrender of a historical Adam.

Virtually every form of theistic evolution that accepts the mainstream evolutionary account of human origins is forced, by the logic of the evolutionary narrative, to deny that Adam was a specific individual human being who was specially created by God and who stands at the beginning of the human family as the single ancestor of the entire race. The options available to the theistic evolutionist are various: Adam may be identified with the first hominid to receive the *imago Dei* (in which case Adam is a biological descendant of pre-human ancestors), or Adam may be understood as representing a population of early humans rather than a single individual, or Adam may be treated as a symbolic or archetypal figure who represents the human condition rather than a historical person whose historical act had historical consequences. Each of these options requires the interpreter to read the Genesis narrative against the grain of its plain meaning, to treat Paul's specific references to Adam as a historical individual in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 as theological constructions built on a mythological foundation, and to abandon the federal structure of the Pauline gospel, the representational disobedience of one man bringing condemnation on all who are in him, without which the representative obedience of Christ bringing justification to all who are in Him by faith is left without its necessary structural parallel.

The BioLogos organization and its scholars have invested significant theological energy in arguing that Paul's Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5 does not require the historicity of Adam, that Paul's argument works even if Adam is a symbolic or archetypal figure rather than a historical individual. But this argument requires the interpreter to distinguish between what Paul actually believed (that Adam was a historical individual, on the evidence of the text) and what Paul's argument actually requires (which the BioLogos interpreter claims does not depend on that belief), and to maintain that the theological point stands even though the historical premise on which Paul bases it is false. This is not a hermeneutical approach that a consistent interpreter can apply selectively to the doctrine of creation without applying it more broadly, and applying it more broadly opens the door to precisely the kind of demythologizing of the Pauline epistles that liberal Protestant theology has practiced since the nineteenth century. The theistic evolutionist who argues that Paul's Adam-Christ parallel works without a historical Adam has inadvertently adopted the hermeneutical principles of Rudolf Bultmann, whether he realizes it or not.

B. *Original Sin, the Fall, and the Imputation of Guilt*

The doctrine of original sin, the inheritance by all of Adam's natural posterity of both the guilt and the corruption that attach to his transgression, stands or falls with the historicity of Adam and the historicity of the fall. If Adam was not a specific historical individual who performed a specific historical act of disobedience in a specific

historical garden, then the “fall” is not a historical event that introduced sin and death into a creation that was previously without them; it is either a symbolic representation of the universal human condition of moral failure (in which case sin is not a departure from an original goodness but a permanent feature of human existence) or a gradual development in which the evolutionary emergence of self-consciousness brought with it the capacity for moral awareness and therefore for moral failure (in which case sin is a product of biological development rather than a covenantal transgression). Neither of these alternatives preserves what Paul means by “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin” (Romans 5:12, NASB 1995).

The imputation of Adam’s guilt to his posterity, the doctrine that all human beings are reckoned guilty before God because of Adam’s representative transgression, prior to and apart from their own personal acts of sin, is the specific doctrine that makes the parallel imputation of Christ’s righteousness to His people intelligible. Romans 5:18–19 states the parallel with unmistakable precision: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (NASB 1995). The structural principle, that the act of a single representative head is reckoned to all who are in him, is the same principle applied first to Adam and then to Christ. If the principle does not apply to Adam, if Adam was not a historical individual whose historical act of disobedience was historically reckoned to his historical posterity, then the principle does not apply to Christ either, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to His people by faith has no structural basis in the Pauline argument.

The death of Christ as the solution to the problem of original sin requires that original sin be a real problem, a real historical condition of real human beings resulting from a real historical event. The theistic evolutionist who denies the historical Adam and the historical fall in the interest of theological accommodation to evolutionary biology has not merely adjusted a peripheral doctrinal detail; he has removed the foundation on which the entire Pauline soteriology rests. The gospel of the Last Adam who reverses what the first Adam introduced requires a first Adam who historically introduced it; the gospel of imputed righteousness requires a historical imputation of guilt to explain what the righteousness is imputed to address; and the gospel of the resurrection that reverses the death introduced by sin requires a historical death introduced by a historical sin. Theistic evolution, consistently applied, does not merely challenge the Young-Earth chronology or the literal six-day reading of Genesis 1; it undermines the coherence of the gospel as Paul presents it, and no amount of theological creativity can fill the gap that the surrender of the historical Adam opens.

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive ... The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

1 Corinthians 15:22, 45, NASB 1995

V. The Scientific Discussion: Limits, Legitimacy, and Creation Science

How the Christian Engages the Empirical Evidence with Epistemological Integrity

A. The Limits of Empirical Science in Addressing Ultimate Origins

The engagement of the Christian with the empirical evidence for evolution requires both intellectual seriousness and epistemological clarity. Intellectual seriousness means taking the scientific evidence seriously, not dismissing the fossil record, the genetic evidence, or the geological data as fabrications or irrelevancies, but engaging them with the same rigor and honesty that the Christian brings to every other domain of inquiry. Epistemological clarity means recognizing the limits of what the empirical evidence can establish and what it cannot, and refusing to allow the philosophical naturalism embedded in the evolutionary consensus to be smuggled into the

interpretation of the evidence as though it were itself a scientific conclusion rather than a philosophical presupposition. The Christian can engage the empirical evidence for evolution with genuine intellectual respect without conceding the naturalistic framework within which that evidence is interpreted, because the framework and the evidence are not the same thing.

The empirical evidence for evolution falls into several categories: the fossil record, which documents the existence of extinct species and the sequence of their appearance in geological strata; the genetic evidence, which documents the similarity of the genomes of different species and has been used to infer their common ancestry; the radiometric dating methods, which have been used to establish the ages of geological formations and the fossils they contain; and the observational evidence for microevolution, the documented variation within species through natural selection and genetic mutation. The Christian has no difficulty affirming the reality of microevolution, the variation within created kinds that adaptation and natural selection produce, as a feature of the created order that God designed for the resilience and flexibility of His creation. The disputed claim is macroevolution: the extrapolation from observed microevolution to the claim that all species, including the human species, are descended from common ancestors through unguided natural processes operating over vast timescales. This extrapolation is not itself an empirical observation; it is a theoretical inference from the observed evidence within the framework of naturalistic presuppositions, and it is precisely the framework that the Christian's epistemological commitments require her to examine critically rather than accept uncritically.

The limits of radiometric dating, the interpretive challenges of the fossil record, the problems of irreducible complexity in biological systems, and the mathematical improbability of the random generation of functional genetic sequences, these are empirical and theoretical challenges to the evolutionary consensus that creation scientists have developed with increasing sophistication over the past several decades, and they deserve to be engaged seriously rather than dismissed as religiously motivated pseudo-science. The Intelligent Design movement, associated with scholars like Michael Behe, Stephen Meyer, and William Dembski, has produced academically rigorous critiques of the sufficiency of natural selection and random mutation as explanatory mechanisms for the biological complexity observed in living organisms, critiques that have been published in peer-reviewed scientific literature and that engage the evolutionary consensus on its own empirical terms. The Christian who is familiar with this literature is equipped to engage the evolutionary consensus with the kind of intellectual seriousness that both the complexity of the evidence and the integrity of Christian witness require.

B. *The Legitimacy of Creation Science and the Epistemological Priority of Scripture*

Creation science, the enterprise of conducting scientific inquiry within the presuppositional framework of the biblical doctrine of creation, including the affirmation of a young earth, a worldwide flood, and the direct creation of distinct kinds of creatures by the living God, is a legitimate scientific enterprise precisely because all scientific inquiry operates within a presuppositional framework, and the framework of creation science is more honestly and explicitly stated than the framework of naturalistic evolutionary science, which tends to present its presuppositions as self-evident facts rather than philosophical commitments. The charge that creation science is not genuine science because it begins with theological presuppositions is a charge that applies equally to all science, including evolutionary science: every scientific program begins with philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, the reliability of perception, the uniformity of natural processes, and the criteria for legitimate explanation. The question is not whether to begin with presuppositions but which presuppositions are most adequately grounded.

The creation science research of the last several decades has produced a substantial body of literature addressing the geological, biological, and astronomical evidence within the framework of the biblical doctrine of creation. The work of the Institute for Creation Research, Answers in Genesis, and the Creation Research Society has addressed questions ranging from the interpretation of the fossil record within a Flood geology framework, to the genetic evidence for the unity of the human race under a single ancestral pair, to the challenges of radiometric dating and the evidence for a young earth. This work has not been uniformly convincing, some of it is more

rigorous than others, and the scientific community's refusal to engage it seriously in the peer-reviewed literature reflects in part the naturalistic gatekeeping of that community rather than solely the quality of the work itself. But the enterprise of creation science as a whole represents the legitimate and necessary effort of the Christian intellectual community to conduct scientific inquiry under the authority of the Word of God rather than in subservience to the philosophical naturalism that currently dominates the academy.

The epistemological priority of Scripture over empirical science in the domain of ultimate origins is not a claim that Scripture is a science textbook or that it addresses every question that scientists ask; it is the claim that when Scripture makes affirmations about the origin of the cosmos, the origin of life, and the origin of the human race, those affirmations are to be received with the full authority that belongs to the inerrant, infallible Word of God, and that empirical science, however powerful and productive in its proper domain, does not have the authority to override, correct, or reinterpret those affirmations. The God who inspired the Scriptures and the God who created the universe are the same God, which means that there can be no ultimate conflict between genuine knowledge of His Word and genuine knowledge of His world. Apparent conflicts arise not from a genuine contradiction between Scripture and nature but from the misinterpretation of one or the other, and when the apparent conflict is between the plain teaching of Scripture and the consensus of a scientific community operating within the presuppositional framework of methodological naturalism, the most careful and humble conclusion is not that Scripture has been refuted but that the naturalistic framework has generated conclusions that exceed what the empirical evidence itself requires.

VI. Pastoral Confidence: The Bible Is Not Threatened

The God Who Wrote the Word Created the World, and He Has Not Left Them in Contradiction

The conclusion of this lesson, and of Unit 2 as a whole, is not a counsel of defensive anxiety about the relationship between the biblical doctrine of creation and the findings of the natural sciences. It is a counsel of pastoral confidence: the confidence that belongs to those who know that the God who breathed out the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16) and the God who created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1) are the same God, and that He has not placed His people in the impossible position of having to choose between the testimony of His Word and the testimony of His world. Genuine conflicts between Scripture and science are impossible, because truth is one and the Author of both is one. Apparent conflicts arise from the misinterpretation of Scripture, the misinterpretation of the natural world, or both, and the history of the church's engagement with science demonstrates that when apparent conflicts are resolved, the resolution consistently vindicates the authority of Scripture rather than requiring its revision.

The pastoral implications of this confidence are immediate and concrete. The young person in the congregation who has been told by her biology teacher, her university professor, or the popular science media that the evolutionary account of human origins is established fact and that the biblical account is religious mythology, she needs not a defensive apology for holding both positions tentatively, but a clear, confident, theologically grounded account of why the biblical testimony to the direct creation of humanity carries more weight than the evolutionary consensus, and why the epistemological priority of Scripture over methodological naturalism is not intellectual cowardice but intellectual integrity. The elder who is asked by a skeptical neighbor whether a Christian can believe in evolution, he needs not a vague assurance that the two can be harmonized somehow, but a clear account of why the harmonization fails and what the biblical alternative is. The pastor who is preparing a series on Genesis, she needs not the embarrassed apology of someone who regards the creation account as a theological framework that modern science has rendered obsolete, but the exegetical and apologetic resources to preach the text with confidence and clarity.

The God who made man from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life is not a mythological figure in a pre-scientific cosmogony; He is the living God whose creative act is the most well-attested event in the history of the universe, because it is attested by the One who performed it in the pages of His own inerrant and infallible

Word. The human being who was formed from the dust and animated by the divine breath is not a late-arriving primate who developed sufficient neural complexity to be designated an image-bearer; he is the specific, individual, historical, specially created creature whom the living God formed with His own hands, breathed into with His own breath, and placed as His vice-regent over a creation He had declared very good. This is who you are. This is where you came from. And this, the creation of humanity by the direct, personal, loving act of the living God, is the only account of human origins that can ground the dignity, the accountability, the fallenness, and the redeemability of the creature in a way that the gospel requires and the human heart, in its most honest moments, recognizes as the truth it has been looking for.

Unit 2, the creation of humanity in its four lessons, has established the exegetical and theological foundation upon which the remaining twenty lessons of this series will build. Adam was specially created from the dust by the direct personal act of God (Lesson 3). Eve was specially created from Adam's side and brought to him as his ezer kenegdo, completing the image of God in the full complementary expression of male and female (Lesson 4). The material creation, including the human body, is very good, affirmed by the Creator, inhabited by the Spirit, destined for resurrection (Lesson 5). And humanity was created, not evolved, the direct, personal, historical creative act of the living God is the only adequate account of human origins, and the attempt to accommodate evolutionary theory at any level compromises the doctrines upon which the gospel depends (Lesson 6). With this foundation firmly in place, Unit 3 will turn to the doctrine of the image of God in its structural, functional, relational, and ethical dimensions, the doctrine that answers the question not merely of how the human creature came to be but of what the human creature is, and what it is for.

“For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:19, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Monogenism	The doctrine that the entire human race descends from a single pair of originally created human beings, Adam and Eve. Monogenism is the plain teaching of Genesis 1–2, affirmed by Paul in Acts 17:26 (“He made from one man every nation of mankind”), and is essential to the federal headship of Adam: the representational significance of Adam’s transgression for all his posterity requires that all humanity descend from a single federal head. Monogenism stands in contrast to polygenism, the evolutionary claim that the human species emerged through a population of evolving hominids rather than a single specially created pair, which undermines the Pauline doctrine of original sin and the representational structure of Romans 5.
Methodological Naturalism	The operating assumption of modern scientific practice that natural causes are sufficient to explain all observed phenomena and that appeals to supernatural agency fall outside the scope of legitimate scientific inquiry. Methodological naturalism is a philosophical presupposition imported into scientific practice, not a conclusion derived from empirical evidence. It ensures that the evolutionary framework, which assumes uniform natural processes and the absence of supernatural intervention, will be the only framework considered legitimate within mainstream science, regardless of whether the empirical evidence actually demands that framework.
Macroevolution	The extrapolation from observed variation within species to the claim that all species, including the human species, descended from common ancestors through unguided natural processes over vast timescales. Macroevolution is the theoretical inference at the heart of Darwinian evolutionary theory and is distinguished from microevolution (observed variation within created kinds through natural selection and genetic mutation). The Christian affirms the reality of microevolution as a feature of the created order, while denying macroevolution as an account of the origin of distinct kinds of creatures, including the human creature.
Common Descent	The central claim of Darwinian evolutionary theory: that all living organisms are descended from common ancestors through an unbroken chain of biological descent, with the human species sharing common ancestry with chimpanzees and other great apes. Common descent is incompatible with the biblical doctrine of special creation (which affirms the direct creation of distinct kinds of creatures by God), the historicity of Adam (which requires a single individually created first man), and the unity of the human race under a single federal head (which requires monogenism rather than the polygenism implied by the evolutionary emergence of humanity from a hominid population).
Theistic Evolution	The position that God created the universe and initiated or guided the evolutionary process through which all living organisms, including human beings, gradually developed, and that the Genesis creation accounts are theological narratives rather than historical descriptions of specific creative events. Theistic evolution attempts to affirm both biblical authority and evolutionary science by reinterpreting the Genesis narrative, but at the cost of surrendering the historicity of Adam, the doctrine of original sin as a historical event, and the federal structure

	of the Pauline gospel. Its hermeneutical concessions to evolutionary science inevitably compromise the doctrines upon which the coherence of the gospel depends.
Creation Science	The enterprise of conducting scientific inquiry within the presuppositional framework of the biblical doctrine of creation, including the affirmations of a young earth (consistent with the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11), a worldwide flood (Genesis 6–9), and the direct creation of distinct kinds of creatures by the living God. Creation science is associated with organizations including the Institute for Creation Research, Answers in Genesis, and the Creation Research Society. It is a legitimate scientific enterprise precisely because all scientific inquiry operates within a presuppositional framework, and the creationist framework is more honestly stated than the naturalistic presuppositions of mainstream evolutionary science.
Presuppositionalism	The apologetic approach, associated with Cornelius Van Til and the Westminster tradition, which holds that all reasoning, including scientific reasoning, operates within a prior framework of philosophical and theological presuppositions, and that the Christian apologist's task is not to argue from neutral common ground but to expose the presuppositional framework of the opposing position and to demonstrate the superiority of the biblical framework as the only adequate foundation for knowledge, ethics, and rationality. Applied to the creation-evolution debate, presuppositionalism argues that the evolutionary consensus is not neutral empirical science but naturalistic science, science conducted within the presuppositional framework of metaphysical naturalism, and that the Christian's alternative framework, grounded in the Word of the God who was present at creation, is more adequately grounded in the nature of reality.
Federal Headship	The doctrine that Adam stood before God as the covenantal representative of the entire human race, such that his act of disobedience is reckoned to all who descend from him by natural generation. Federal headship is the structural principle that connects the doctrine of human origins (monogenism, descent from a single individual) to the doctrine of original sin (imputed guilt and inherited corruption) and the doctrine of redemption (the obedience of the Last Adam reckoned to all who are in Him by faith). The coherence of the federal structure requires the historicity of Adam as a specific individual: a symbolic or representative Adam cannot function as a genuine federal head in the sense that Romans 5:12–21 requires.
Operational vs. Historical Science	The distinction between science that studies repeatable, testable, observable phenomena in the present (operational science) and science that attempts to reconstruct unobserved past events from present-day evidence using the assumption of uniform natural processes (historical science). Operational science is at its most reliable when it studies present-day processes through controlled experiment; historical science is epistemologically weaker because its conclusions depend on assumptions about the past that cannot be directly verified. The creation-evolution debate is primarily a dispute about historical science, about how to interpret present-day evidence for the reconstruction of events that occurred in the unobserved past, and not a dispute about the validity of operational science.

Animal Death Before the Fall

The theological problem that the evolutionary account of life's development on earth, which requires billions of years of animal suffering, death, and extinction as the mechanism of evolutionary progress, conflicts with the biblical account of the entrance of death into the created order at the fall of Adam. Romans 5:12–14 and 8:20–22 explicitly connect the subjection of the creation to futility and decay with Adam's transgression rather than with the pre-fall operation of natural processes. If evolutionary theory is correct, animal death preceded the fall by billions of years, which means death is not the consequence of sin but a feature of the pre-fall creation, a conclusion that undermines the Pauline argument that Christ's death and resurrection address the problem that Adam's sin introduced.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the conflict between the biblical doctrine of creation and the evolutionary consensus is not fundamentally a conflict between scientific evidence and religious faith but a conflict between two presuppositional frameworks: the framework of methodological naturalism, which excludes supernatural explanation before the inquiry begins, and the framework of biblical creationism, which receives the testimony of the One who was present at the creation as the most reliable account of what occurred. This epistemological clarity is not a retreat from the intellectual demands of the debate; it is the precondition for engaging the debate with the kind of integrity and confidence that genuine Christian witness requires. The Christian who understands the presuppositional structure of the creation-evolution debate will not be intimidated by the apparent authority of the scientific consensus, because she understands that the consensus is not a neutral report of what the evidence shows but an interpretation of the evidence within a framework that her own epistemological commitments require her to examine critically.

We must also believe that the theological costs of theistic evolution are not peripheral adjustments but structural damage to the doctrines upon which the gospel depends. The surrender of a historical Adam is not a small price to pay for intellectual credibility; it is the surrender of the foundation on which the Pauline doctrine of original sin rests, and with it the foundation on which the Pauline doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ rests. The Christian who understands the structural role of the historical Adam in the Pauline argument of Romans 5 will understand why the question of Adam's historicity is not a peripheral skirmish in the culture wars but a central battle for the integrity of the gospel itself, and will hold the historical Adam with the same conviction with which she holds the historical resurrection, because the two are structurally interdependent in the apostolic proclamation.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the pastoral confidence that this lesson calls for be a genuinely felt confidence, not the bravado of someone who has not engaged the difficulty of the questions, but the settled assurance of someone who has wrestled with them and found the biblical account to be more, not less, persuasive on examination. The student who has worked through Lessons 3 through 6 of this series has been given the exegetical, theological, and presuppositional resources to engage the evolutionary consensus with intellectual seriousness and theological confidence. The appropriate emotional register is not anxiety, as though the next discovery in paleontology might finally overturn the biblical account, but the serene confidence of those who know that the God who made the world has spoken about it in His Word, and that His speaking is more reliable than any human reconstruction of a past that no human being observed.

Desire the kind of theological literacy about human origins that equips you to be genuinely helpful to the people in your congregation or community who are genuinely confused by the apparent conflict between the Bible and science on this question. The young person who has been told in school that evolution is established fact and who comes to the pastor wondering how to reconcile it with her faith, she does not need a vague assurance that somehow it all works out; she needs a clear, theologically grounded, intellectually honest account of why the biblical testimony to the direct creation of humanity carries more weight than the evolutionary consensus, and why the epistemological priority of Scripture over methodological naturalism is not intellectual dishonesty but intellectual integrity. Developing the theological literacy to provide that account is one of the most important pastoral investments a teacher or preacher can make in the current cultural moment.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Work through the presuppositional argument carefully until you can articulate it in plain language without technical philosophical jargon. The key moves are: (1) all reasoning operates within a prior framework of assumptions; (2) the evolutionary consensus operates within the framework of methodological naturalism, which is a philosophical presupposition rather than a scientific conclusion; (3) the Christian's framework, grounded in the authority of the inerrant Word of God, is a legitimate alternative presuppositional framework; (4) within the Christian framework, the same empirical evidence points toward different conclusions about human origins than it does within the naturalistic framework. Practice articulating this argument in a five-minute presentation that a thoughtful non-specialist could follow.
- Read Romans 5:12–21 slowly and in full, attending specifically to the structural parallel between Adam and Christ. Count the uses of “one man” or its equivalent. Trace the logical structure of Paul’s argument: what does the transgression of the one man accomplish for those who are in him, and what does the obedience of the One accomplish for those who are in Him? Then ask: what specifically would be lost from this argument if Adam were not a historical individual? Could the argument survive the replacement of Adam with a symbolic figure, an archetypal representative, or a population of early hominids? Write down your conclusions in a paragraph of no more than 150 words.
- **Read one primary apologetic resource on creation science.** For the Young-Earth Creationist case, Douglas Kelly’s *Creation and Change* (1997) provides the most exegetically and theologically rigorous defense available in the Reformed tradition. For the Intelligent Design critique of the evolutionary mechanism, Stephen Meyer’s *Signature in the Cell* (2009) and *Darwin’s Doubt* (2013) provide academically rigorous challenges to the sufficiency of natural selection and random mutation. For a comprehensive survey of the creation-evolution debate from a creationist perspective, John Whitcomb and Henry Morris’s *The Genesis Flood* (1961) remains the foundational text of the modern Young-Earth movement, though more recent scholarship has refined and advanced many of its arguments.
- Identify the specific form in which the evolutionary challenge to biblical anthropology presents itself most acutely in the ministry context you inhabit. Is it the secular university student returning home with questions about the Bible and science? Is it the elder who is embarrassed by the congregation’s Young-Earth position and advocates for a more “sophisticated” view? Is it the young professional whose scientific training has produced genuine intellectual tension with his faith? For each of these pastoral situations, identify the specific theological and apologetic resources from this lesson that are most directly relevant, and commit to developing the ability to deploy those resources with both intellectual clarity and pastoral warmth.
- Pray for the congregation’s engagement with the question of human origins with the same theological seriousness you bring to any other doctrinal challenge. Pray specifically that the young people in the congregation who are being formed by secular educational institutions would have the theological formation and the pastoral support to hold the biblical doctrine of creation with conviction and intellectual confidence; that the teachers and parents in the congregation would have the knowledge and the courage to engage the evolutionary consensus on their children’s behalf; and that the congregation as a whole would be formed by the conviction that the God who created humanity has spoken truthfully and authoritatively about that creation in His Word, and that His Word is more than adequate to meet every intellectual challenge that the surrounding culture can mount against it.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, how would you have described the relationship between the biblical doctrine of creation and the scientific theory of evolution? Would you have described it as a conflict between science and religion, as a conflict between two interpretations of evidence, or as a conflict between two presuppositional frameworks? Has the lesson changed your understanding of what kind of conflict is actually at issue? Share your initial and revised positions.

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Genesis 1:26–27 and Genesis 2:7, 21–22 together as a unit. What do the verbs used for the creation of humanity in these texts, *bara* (בָּרָא, create), *yatsar* (יָצַר, form), *banah* (בָּנָה, build), suggest about the character of the creative acts described? Is there any syntactical, grammatical, or literary feature of these texts that would support reading them as accounts of a long natural process rather than specific divine acts? What would the interpreter have to do to the text in order to accommodate an evolutionary reading?
- Read Romans 5:12–21 in its entirety, paying careful attention to the frequency and function of the phrases “one man,” “the one,” and “the many.” What is the logical structure of Paul’s argument? What does the parallel between the “one man’s” transgression and the “One’s” act of righteousness require Paul to believe about the historical character of each? Could Paul’s argument in this passage be maintained if Adam were not a historical individual whose historical act of transgression had historical consequences for his historical posterity?
- Read Acts 17:22–31. What does Paul affirm about the origin of the human race in verse 26 (“He made from one man every nation of mankind”)? How does this affirmation function in Paul’s apologetic argument to the Athenian philosophers? What does it imply about the unity of the human race, the historical character of Adam, and the accountability of all human beings before the one God who created them? How does this text serve as a model for the church’s engagement with the evolutionary consensus in the contemporary intellectual culture?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:21–22 and 45–49 side by side with Romans 5:12–21. What do these two Pauline texts share in their treatment of Adam, and what does each contribute distinctively to the biblical doctrine of human origins? How does 1 Corinthians 15:45, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit”, directly quote Genesis 2:7, and what does this direct quotation imply about Paul’s understanding of the historical character of the Genesis creation narrative?
- Read Romans 8:18–22. How does Paul describe the condition of the created order in the present age (vv. 20–21), and to what does he attribute that condition? What does this text imply about the relationship between the fall of Adam and the subjection of the creation to futility and decay? How does this text create a theological problem for the evolutionary account, which requires billions of years of animal death and suffering in the pre-fall created order?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that the conflict between creation and evolution is fundamentally epistemological rather than empirical, a conflict between presuppositional frameworks rather than a conflict between the biblical account and the scientific evidence. Do you find this argument persuasive? Is there a version of the creation-evolution conflict that is genuinely empirical rather than presuppositional? If so, what specific empirical evidence would, in your judgment, constitute a genuine challenge to the biblical doctrine of creation, and on what grounds?
- The lesson draws the distinction between operational science (repeatable, testable, observable present-day phenomena) and historical science (the reconstruction of unobserved past events from present-day evidence). Is this distinction valid? Are there areas of historical science that achieve the reliability of

operational science? How does this distinction apply specifically to the claims of evolutionary biology about the origin of the human species? What specific claims of evolutionary biology are operational (verifiable by present-day observation) and which are historical (inferred from present-day evidence about unobserved past events)?

- The BioLogos position argues that Paul's Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5 does not require the historicity of Adam, that the theological point stands even if Adam is a symbolic or archetypal figure. The lesson argues that this position inadvertently adopts the hermeneutical principles of Rudolf Bultmann. Is this a fair characterization? What specifically does the BioLogos argument share with Bultmann's demythologizing program, and where does it differ? Could the BioLogos argument be defended without conceding the hermeneutical principles that the lesson attributes to it?
- The lesson identifies the problem of animal death before the fall as a significant theological objection to evolutionary theory. How serious is this objection? Does the Genesis narrative require the absence of animal death before the fall, or only the absence of human death? What specific biblical texts bear on this question? How do proponents of theistic evolution respond to the objection, and how would you evaluate their response?
- The lesson affirms the legitimacy of creation science as a scientific enterprise and the epistemological priority of Scripture over empirical science in the domain of ultimate origins. Does this position risk a kind of intellectual dishonesty, beginning with a predetermined conclusion and interpreting the evidence to fit it? How does the presuppositional approach distinguish itself from motivated reasoning? What criteria would allow you to identify when creationist interpretation of the evidence is intellectually honest and when it is not?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson describes several pastoral situations in which the question of human origins presents itself: the university student with scientific training, the elder advocating for accommodation, the young professional experiencing intellectual tension with his faith. Which of these situations is most immediately relevant to your ministry context? What specific theological and apologetic resources from this lesson, and from the broader Unit 2, would you deploy in each situation, and how would you adapt them for the specific person and context?
- The lesson argues that the theistic evolutionist's surrender of a historical Adam is not a peripheral adjustment but structural damage to the doctrines upon which the gospel depends. Has this argument changed the way you think about the pastoral stakes of the creation-evolution debate? If a theistic evolutionist in your congregation holds a high view of Scripture and a genuine commitment to the gospel but denies the historicity of Adam, how would you engage him? What would you say? What texts would you use? What would you be willing to regard as a matter of genuine disagreement within the bounds of orthodoxy, and what would you not?
- The lesson closes with the vision of pastoral confidence: the settled assurance of those who have wrestled with the questions and found the biblical account more, not less, persuasive on examination. Are you there? If not, what specific intellectual or theological questions remain unresolved for you? What reading, study, or conversation would be most helpful in moving toward the settled confidence that the lesson describes? Identify one concrete next step in your own intellectual formation on the question of human origins.
- Paul's proclamation at the Areopagus, that God made from one man every nation of mankind (Acts 17:26), was offered in the most cosmopolitan and philosophically sophisticated intellectual environment of the ancient world, without apology and without accommodation to the philosophical consensus of his audience. What would it look like to follow Paul's apologetic model in the contemporary intellectual environment? What specific affirmations about human origins would the Areopagus address demand, and what would it require the speaker to deny or challenge? Draft a brief outline of a five-minute presentation on human

origins addressed to a secular university audience, following the structure of Paul's Areopagus address as a model.

- Unit 2 of the Anthropology series is now complete. Looking back across Lessons 3 through 6, what is the single most important doctrinal conviction about the creation of humanity that you have either gained or deepened through this unit? How has it changed the way you understand your own identity as a human being? How has it changed the way you understand the people in your congregation or community? And how, if at all, has it changed the way you understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, who came to reclaim and restore what the first Adam lost?

Prayer Focus

Open this sixth and final lesson of Unit 2 with a reading of Psalm 33:6-9, one of the most doxologically concentrated accounts of divine creation in the entire Old Testament: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host ... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (NASB 1995). Read it as a prayer of adoration, as the Psalmist’s astonished recognition that the God who created the cosmos did so not by laborious process or gradual development but by the sovereign exercise of His word and breath, in exactly the way that a God of infinite power and infinite wisdom would create, immediately, completely, and perfectly. Let the simplicity and the majesty of this account of creation, He spoke, and it was done, function as the doxological counterpart to the six lessons of Unit 2: the God who spoke the world into being is the God who personally formed the human creature from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life, and this God has spoken about what He did in the pages of the Word that He breathed out for the instruction and confidence of His people.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the comprehensive doctrine of creation developed across Unit 2 to deepen the gratitude and the wonder with which you approach each person of the Trinity. Begin with the Father, the Creator, who said “Let Us make man in Our image” and whose creative decree was immediately and completely fulfilled in the formation of Adam and the fashioning of Eve, the God whose plan for humanity was not thwarted by the fall, whose purposes in creation were not frustrated by the corruption of sin, and who has in the fullness of time sent His Son to reclaim and restore the humanity He created. Move to the Son, the eternal Word through whom all things were created (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16) and in whose image the human creature was originally made, who became the very creature He had made, the Last Adam who recapitulates and reverses what the first Adam did, and who is even now at the right hand of the Father interceding for all who are in Him. Conclude with the Spirit, who was hovering over the waters at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:2), who breathed out the Scriptures that testify to the creation of the human creature (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21), and who is even now renewing in the hearts and minds of believers the image that sin has corrupted, conforming them to the likeness of the Son who is the perfect image of the invisible God.

Pray together for the church’s engagement with the question of human origins in three specific directions. First, for doctrinal clarity and courage: that the Lord would raise up in the contemporary church men and women who hold the biblical doctrine of the direct creation of humanity with the same exegetical precision, theological comprehensiveness, and intellectual confidence that this unit has sought to model, who are neither intimidated by the evolutionary consensus nor dismissive of the genuine intellectual work required to engage it, but who bring to the question the same combination of scholarly rigor and biblical conviction that characterizes the best of the Reformed tradition. Second, for pastoral wisdom: that the shepherds of the church would know how to speak to the members of their congregations who are genuinely confused or troubled by the apparent conflict between the Bible and science, knowing when to give a detailed apologetic account and when to simply affirm the sufficiency and trustworthiness of the Word of God, and always speaking with the pastoral warmth and theological confidence that the gospel provides. Third, for cultural courage: that the church would not be ashamed to proclaim, in the intellectual climate of the twenty-first century, that humanity was created and not evolved, that the God who breathed out the Scriptures has told us where we came from, and that His account is not threatened by the findings of any science conducted within the boundaries of genuine intellectual integrity, because the God who wrote the Word is the same God who created the world, and He has not left them in contradiction.

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host ... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

Psalm 33:6, 9, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 1:26–27; 2:7, 21–22; Psalm 33:6–9; Acts 17:22–31; Romans 5:12–21; 8:18–22; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49; 2 Timothy 3:16*

Soli Deo Gloria
To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Dr. Joshua Nichols

josh@faithfultotheword.com | faithfultotheword.com