

Round Table Old Testament Discussion (Table 1) 9:00AM-10:00AM

Participants: Dick Averbeck, Lawson Younger, John Oswalt, Stephen Moshier, John Bloom, Clinton Ohlers (Moderator), Oliver Hersey (Scribe).

Summary and Future Benchmarks:

1. We need to continue wrestling with the *originality* of the Genesis account. Specifically, identifying differences between Gen 1-4 and other ANE accounts and developing a consensus as to *why* those differences are in the text.
2. We need to identify what is the *enduring truth* of Genesis is. This means working towards understanding matters like the three level universe, the *raqia*, man as crown, God as not created, etc. Additionally, we should take into account the macro structure of Genesis. Related to this matter is our understanding of the nature of the divine revelation in Genesis. Is it strictly theological? Is it *both* theological *and* historical?

Originality of Genesis Creation Accounts:

- In these accounts author is making observations of the material world around them and then explaining how that material came to be.
- The ANE and Genesis accounts are highly scientific (observation-based) for their day and age.
 - Three Level Universe:
 - All over the ANE. This underlies the 3 + 3 + 1 patterning of Genesis 1.
 - System of threes and sevens. Striking in light of the fact that the ancient peoples did not operate on a seven-day week! Israel is unique in that they are the only group who celebrates the Sabbath.
 - Does the three = totality of the cosmos?
 - Is seven based on sexagesimal + 1? The same questions could be posed about the number twelve. An issue that could be explored further in terms of numeric notices.

Notable Differences:

- Gen 1 puts man (and woman) as the crown of the creation opposed to a slave.
- God has not emerged from matter in Gen 1:1.
- God creates the great sea monsters *after* everything else. Moreover, the sea monsters are created.
- Perhaps such differences arose as a polemic against other ANE religious worldviews.
- Hebrew language is used in Genesis.

Goal of comparative analysis as it regards Creation Accounts:

- We do analysis step by step and then try to translate and we also need to decipher between how they (the ancient people/first hearers of the text) understood the world around them and the way they talked about it *figuratively*. In other words, we need to help scientists and others in the field as well as the church develop literacy for reading the creation accounts against the ANE backdrop.
- Even though the general trend in biblical studies is to date Genesis late, there is a trend in biblical studies towards undoing DtrH, which will have a direct effect on the dating of the Pentateuch. Also, there is a trend in Mesopotamian studies to date things much earlier.

Matters to consider further:

- How did the ancient Near Easterner understand stars, planets, and constellations as they were perceived in the sky? How did they move and how were they fixed in the realm of the heavens? What is the term *raqia'*
- What is the philological underpinnings behind the term *raqia'*? How is this term used in Genesis compared to elsewhere in the Hebrew canon? What is the Greek understanding of this term when they are translating the LXX?
- Issue of concordist and non-concordist understanding. Can we make connections from the modern perspectives and see those as hidden entities in the text becoming unlocked? It usually gets abandoned because of over-use and reaching. Nevertheless, what more can we say about this?