

## God's Grand Design

### Class #1

#### Why does this topic of origins matter?

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October 4, 2023

The Rock Church

(pray, pause, breath)

## INTRODUCTION

Good evening everyone! Welcome, my name is Josh Whitney, if we haven't met. I am a pastor here at the Rock Church. Welcome to our first **God's Grand Design class!** I am excited so many of you have decided to attend.

Honestly, I am a little overwhelmed by the response. Jon and I discussed changing our small group into this class. I thought we might get 30 or 40. Then Bryan said he wanted to bring the Young Adults. And Tom brought his SG and Jim brought his SG. And now we are suddenly well north of 120 people on my email list. Which is awesome.

So let's start and let's start with prayer.

...

In Jesus name, amen.

So this first class will be an overview. But I want to answer this question. **Why does this topic of origins matter?** Tonight, we will discuss some Bible, and science and fun.

First a couple logistics. Get on the email list. I will send an **email** every Monday with the plan for the week. So if you didn't get my email on Monday morning, and this morning, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Typically I will just send one email on Mondays.

Second logistic item, the **calendar**. I created a google doc. I will update that week to week with the topic and the Bible passage so you can read ahead if you want. And after class, I will post my notes, ppt and videos clips here. And possibly recordings here as well.

The actual class format. **~20 minutes of lecture, 20 minutes of video & 20 minutes of discussion.** But that is all subject to change, week to week. Start at 7:00 p.m. End at 8:00 p.m.

**Submit your topical questions.** I would love to answer as many of your questions as possible over the 15 classes. So email me, [josh@trc.life](mailto:josh@trc.life) "Josh, I have always wondered about this or that." Probably will, but would love to hear your question.

What is so amazing and challenging about this topic of origins it that is covers so many fields of study. We will get into these and more. **Theology. Geology. Philosophy. Paleontology. Biology. Microbiology. Astronomy. Archaeology.** And many, many more. Some of these topics we will scratch the surface on. Others we will dive deep. I am really excited to do this.

## MY STUDY

So this question of origins, evolution and creation, genesis, what does the Bible teach, where did the earth come from, the age of the earth, what about dinosaurs, and science. Nacho. I don't believe in God, I believe in science

These are topics I started studying when I was in high school and college. So since the early 90s I have been digging into these subjects.

And that study has continued for 30 years now.

Here is a picture of my **bookshelf** right now at home. I have read the vast majority of the books on those books. All on these topics.

Here is a picture of some of the **movies** I have watched over the last few years. Again on a variety of related topics.

Here are some pictures of a trip I went on six years ago, **9-day rafting trip** down the Grand Canyon with Answers in Genesis. Dr. Snelling lectured us continuously for 9 days. Incredibly educational. And a lot of fun. Very memorable trip. I think I am every one of these photos if we could zoom in. Kinda like where's waldo?

And now, on an almost weekly basis, I am reading articles, watching videos while I work out, listening to podcast, reading magazines. It is a subject that I love to study.

## HISTORY

Why?

Why do I love to study this topic?

Time out. My education background. In my undergrad study I got a bachelor of science in Civil Engineering. And then I got a master of science in geotechnical engineering. Any geotechs in the room? Kenan. Geotechnical engineering is a discipline that focuses on the behavior of natural geological materials. I know a lot about soil, rocks and geology and how to build things on it. I have been practicing geotechnical engineering since 2000.

For my master's thesis, I did a two-year research project and I wrote a 350-page book on Water Migration in Expansive Soils at the FAA TRACON Building at DIA.

I love science. I love geology. I love the Bible.

Why do I love to study this topic?

Because it is foundational. What do I mean?

I was raised in a Christian home. I was taught the Bible. I was taught this verse. **Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**

So I have 21 years of education. 4 years of high school. 5 years of undergrad. 3 years of grad school. Biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy, physiology, we got into geology. And in all of my high school, undergrad and grad school, I was taught something different than this.

Where did the earth come from? According to Los Alamos national laboratory. **Earth formed from debris orbiting around our sun about 4 ½ billion years ago. The story begins with the Big Bang nearly 14 billion years ago, which spewed hydrogen atoms throughout the universe.**

That is an illustration of the proposed cosmological evolution of the universe over time.

Where did life come from? According to Scientific American's. **According to the conventional hypothesis, the earliest living cells emerged as a result of chemical evolution on our planet billions of years ago in a process called abiogenesis.**

Abiogenesis, simply means life came from non-life. This is a geothermal vent because the latest theory is that early simple life arose near one of these.

So imagine me in high school, undergrad and grad school, studying my Bible on one hand and learning at times different theories of origins.

That is what launched me into this topic 30 years ago.

Here is what we believe and teach at the Rock. You might have seen these are trc.life/flood.

Essentially this class is a deep dive into these three paragraphs. Why we believe them. Why we think this is what the Bible teaches and why there is a lot of science to back it up.

**The Rock Church believes the Bible (the inspired Word of God) is completely true. This means we believe it's accurate as related to earthly events – both in the past and in the future. We believe events described in the Bible happened just as they were written. The miracles described in the Bible are true, historical events that took place as the Scriptures depicted them.**

These two following paragraphs are fairly controversial.

### **Creation**

**The Creation of the universe came about just as the Word of God described; it was a six-day Creation event. The true age of the earth (and all of the physical universe) is measured in thousands (not billions) of years (Genesis 1-11). Mankind began with two individuals who came into being through a special, personal, creative act of God (Genesis 2).**

These two following paragraphs are fairly controversial.

## **Flood**

There was a time when the entire world was covered with water as the result of a year-long Flood. This was a judgment from God on all human and land dwelling life. It resulted in the death of all humans (and animals) who were not in the Ark during the Flood (Genesis 6-9).

Two comments on these.

One, you are going to become an expert on every part of these 3 paragraphs over the next 15 classes, if you stick with it.

Two, if you want some homework week to week, read Genesis 1 through 11. I will email you the particular section we are studying that week. But know most likely it will be from Genesis 1-11.

## **4 CAMPS**

As I see it, there are **4 camps** when it comes to the topic of origins. Across the top there, what is your worldview, Christian or non-Christian worldview. Some of you are not Christians, I am so glad you are here.

Many of you are Christians, I am glad you are here.

And on the left, two major views of origins. God created everything through special creation. Or evolution, gradual change over time.

Editorial note, there are smart, kind, good people in all of these quadrants if you will.

First quadrant, upper left, the Christian who believes that God created the world/universe thousands of years ago. Next couple weeks, we will get into this view specifically, biblically and scientifically.

Lower left, the Christian who believes that God directed evolutionary processes over the billions years of earth history. Some of you are in that camp, and again I am so glad you are here.

Lower right, these are people who don't believe in God and believe that evolution is the best theory to explain the universe, life, earth, and people. And some of you are in that camp, and again I am so glad you are here.

Upper right. I have never met this person. They don't believe in God, but they believe in special creation. I don't know if they exist.

A couple comments on these four quadrants.

First comment, maybe you are on the line between two of these camps. I believe in God but I am not sure if it was special creation or God directed evolution. I am not sure on the age of the earth. I was on the fence on this topic for a while. And if you are undecided, again I am so glad you are here.

Second comment. These questions of origins are not salvation level beliefs. It doesn't say in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him [and special creation] should not perish but have eternal life.

No, we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. Your beliefs on this topic are not a salvation level matter. There is love and unity in our church around the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Personally, I love to read and study Christians who have different views of origins than me. We will all be together in heaven. I have much to learn from them.

I believe this topic is incredibly important because it impacts how you read the Bible.

In this class, I am going to explain why I believe the upper left quadrant makes the most sense **BIBLICALLY** and **SCIENTIFICALLY**.

If you don't agree with me, don't stress it. I am not worried about it; you don't need to be either. Attend, listen, ask questions. See where it goes.

I am simply explaining why I believe the upper left quadrant makes the most sense, biblically and scientifically.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

So that is why this topic matters to me personally. I believe the Bible and I was taught a different theory of origins. And I have spent 30 years studying it.

But it goes even deeper than that, it gets into implications. These beliefs impact your worldview. This impacts how you live your life. Because there are different answers to the ultimate questions of life. Where did I come from? Why am I here? What happens after I die?

Because maybe you think, I don't really care about this topic. It doesn't really matter to me.

I assure you. It does. There are profound implications to every one of these ideas. I took these photos when the pastors visited the Creation Museum in Kentucky a few years ago.

They had seven ultimate questions. I took photos.

### **1. Why am I here?**

According to the evolutionary view. We are just a cosmic accident, the product of time and chance.

And according to the creation view. God created man in his image and gave man authority over this world. We are made to love God and one another and reflect God's glory to this world.

Two very different answers to this question of why am I here.

Next question.

## 2. Why do people suffer and die?

According to the evolutionary view. Death, suffering and disease have always been part of the evolutionary history on our planet. A long quote by Richard Dawkins.

And according to the creation view. God made a perfect world, but man's rebellion brought death, suffering, and disease into this world. A bunch of supporting verses.

Next question.

## 3. How do we know right and wrong?

According to the evolutionary view. The individual or the society decides what is right and wrong. This can vary depending upon the individual or the society.

And according to the creation view. God is the standard of what is right and wrong – morality is rooted in the perfectly good nature of the unchanging all powerful God of the Bible.

Next question.

## 4. Is there any hope?

According to the evolutionary view. There is no hope of overcoming suffering, disease and death. Someday you will die, and your body will rot. There is no afterlife. Every person, whether kind or murderous, will cease to exist with no final justice. Ultimately life is meaningless. Quotes by Richard Dawkins and Bill Nye the science guy.

And according to the creation view. God put on human flesh, stepping into history as a man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered and died to pay the penalty for our sins. Those who believe in Him will be forgiven and live eternal with God.

Again two very different answers to this ultimate question.

Next question.

## 5. What happens when I die?

According to the evolutionary view. There is no afterlife for anyone. All people will eventually die and cease to exist. A Stephen Hawking's quote. I will put these slides on the google doc so you can go back and review.

And according to the creation view. Every person has been created to live forever, eternal life with the creator or eternal separation from Him in the lake of fire.

Next question.

## 6. Will justice be served?

According to the evolutionary view. Ultimate there is no justice. Yes, some people will pay for certain crimes in the present world, but other criminals will get away with their crimes. The mass murderer suffers the same fate as the most loving and kind person. A quote by Sam Harris.

And according to the creation view. God is perfect in his love and perfect love demands perfect justice. Justice will ultimately be served. Those who have received forgiveness of their sins through faith in the resurrected Savior's sacrificial death on their behalf will inherit eternal life. Those who reject Christ' payment of sins will suffer eternal for their rebellion against God.

And then final question. Notice the difference.

## 7. How will it all end?

According to the evolutionary view. The universe will eventually undergo a heat death when all usable energy has been used up. All life will end. Indeed, all chemical, biological and physical processes will cease. A quote by Christopher Hitchens.

And according to the creation view. This world will be burned up and the Lord will create a new heavens and a new earth that will be filled with righteousness.

The contrast between these two worldviews could not be more striking.

So this isn't just some Bible nerd conversation.

There are implications that flow from these ideas that flow into how we live our lives. What you truly really believe impacts how you live.

I trust you see that. On one hand, you have those who believe the Bible is completely true, it says what it means. And it means what it says.

And those who don't believe that. They have a different way to explain where we came from and different answers to these ultimate questions.

And I think the topics of creation and the flood bring the contrast to a head.

I saw this the other day on a website. It is advertising a Christian conference about origins and it is a good summary of the implications of these ideas and why it matters? This is the promotion for their conference.

First the evolutionary worldview.

Cosmic dust. That's all you are. The forces of nature combined with molecules in motion, and you came to be a mere brute. No conscience. No morals. No meaning. You're nothing special. There's no grand plan for your life, either, other than the one you make up. You decide how to live. You do you. This is the tale that man tells you.

Second the creationist worldview.

The Maker tells a different story about you. Before he made you, he knew you. He fashioned your frame. He breathed life into you. He stamped you with his image and now you're under his care. And like a master painter, he loves his creation. He loves you because he made you and you are his. You can flourish in his Kingdom. He even guides you through the letters of his Word.

So this, my friends, is why I believe this topic matters. There are two fundamentally different worldviews at play here with significant implications for your life.

## TOPICS

So that is the WHY? Why this topic matters.

How could we approach these topics? There are many different questions we could answer.

What is science? What can science teach us about origins?

How old is the earth? What about radiocarbon/radiometric dating?

Did people evolve from primates? What about shared DNA?

Who did Adam and Eve's children marry?

What does Genesis 1 actually teach?

Did the flood happen? Do we see any evidence of it?

How did the animals spread over the earth after the flood?

How does plate tectonics fit into all of this?

What about the ice age?

Where are the human fossils?

Aren't there examples of evolution happening around us?

What does the Bible teach about astronomy? Does distant starlight present a problem?

How did we get the different races and languages?

How did Noah fit all the animals on the ark?

How do we get fossils? What happened to the dinosaurs?

How was the Grand Canyon formed? How do we explain the geological column?

Did Adam have a belly button?



But I don't want to answer a bunch of questions randomly. I have an outline of where I want the class to go. And we will answer these questions as we go through this outline.

But again your questions will shape the curriculum SIGNIFICANTLY. If I get a bunch of questions about a particular topic, I will address them. So please email me any questions you have.

Here is how we are going to frame it.

Gen. 1-3 – Creation, evolution, human evolution, meaning of day

Gen. 4 – More about the age of the earth

Gen. 6-9 – The flood and implications for geology and biology

Gen. 11 – Origins of languages and different people groups

Again, read over Genesis 1 through 11, multiple times, over the next few months. If you need a bible, I will give you one. Take notes. Email me your questions.

## **JONAH**

So my final few minutes before we watch a video clip, I want to talk about Jonah.

So we will discuss Jonah,  
Watch a video,  
Get into groups to discuss,  
and be done by 800.

You all know **Jonah**. Pretty famous Bible story. He was one of the Old Testament prophets. He taught the people of Israel, he called them to repentance

But then God told Jonah to go preach a message of repentance to the wicked city of Nineveh. They were the Israelites enemies. And they were bad news. Brutal, murderous. Jonah didn't want to go. Not because he was scared. But because I think he didn't like them. Why would I want our enemies to convert?

Jonah didn't want to, so he ran away. He went in the opposite direction that God called him to go. He wanted to go as far as possible from God's plan. So he buys ticket on a boat and they take off into the Mediterranean Sea, heading west. God told him to go east to Nineveh.

But then God sent a storm. Really bad storm. The sailors are freaking out. They think the boat will sink and they will all drown. They cast lots. The lot falls to Jonah.

They say, what's up man? He tells them I am fleeing from God. They freak out even more. Jonah says throw me overboard and you will be fine. Notice, Jonah would rather drown than preach in Nineveh.

But they don't, they try to row back to land. But they can't. So the sailors ask God's forgiveness. And they throw Jonah overboard. Let's pick it up in Jonah 1:15

**Jonah 1:15** So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. **17** And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

The next few verses contain Jonah's prayer in the belly of the fish. Which we don't have time to unpack. Then this verse.

**Jonah 2:10** And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

**Jonah** And again God tells Jonah again to go preach to Nineveh. He goes this time. Preaches a message of repentance. The city repents. And Jonah threw another tantrum. The end.

There are some amazing lessons in this story. We are not going to talk about ignoring God's call in your life.

I just want you to focus on all of the practical aspects of the story. One, the storm ceased as soon as Jonah went into the water. Two, a great fish swallowed Jonah. Three, he spent 3 days and 3 nights in the fish. And then 4 at God's command the fish vomited Jonah out on the ground. Those are miraculous events.

As I see it, there are **three interpretative options** with this Jonah story or any miraculous biblical text.

**Option 1: This story is fishy. Didn't happen. This person doesn't believe in miracles or God.** No way this is impossible. A YouTube atheist would say a whale can't even swallow a person.

**Option 2: This story is myth. It didn't happen like this. But this person believes in miracles and God. This is a myth to teach us a spiritual lesson.** This is a poem. It is mytho-historical. The Bible is full of powerful stories, but they are just that. Stories.

It's 2023. Science man.

**Option 3: This story is true. The story actually happened as it is written. This person believes in miracles and God.** It is not a Sunday school story. It is a real story. The dude was in a fish for 3 days.

## **HOW DO WE HANDLE THE TEXT?**

How do we handle the text? So whenever we read something in the Bible that seems unbelievable, or miraculous, or supernatural. It is important to step back. I have 3 interpretative filters as we approach this story. Or any story like it.

## What does the actual Hebrew text say in in the Old Testament?

I don't speak Hebrew. But I can use the internet, here [bible hub](#). Here are the actual Hebrew words in Jonah 1:17. Hebrew is read from right to left.

And had prepared Yahweh a fish great to swallow Jonah. And was Jonah in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

You see the word Three. Means Three in Hebrew.

You see the word day. Yom, it means day. We will unpack this. You will become experts at yom, probably next class in two weeks.

You see the word night. Lel means night.

Now the word dag, means a fish. Not quite. It doesn't say whale. In 1380s, the Wycliffe Bible translated the word fish as whale. But the Hebrew word dag describe a great range of fish and sea creatures. It is described as great. Sea creature big enough to swallow a whole man. So this word is anything that lives in the sea.

So the Hebrew is telling us that Jonah was swallowed by a large sea creature. And he was in it for 3 days and 3 nights.

Some people have scoffed at because of the world whale in certain translations. **Whales don't swallow people.** They eat krill. Plankton, little creatures. They have this screen here. But knowing what the actual Hebrew says helps us approach the topic more carefully.

It doesn't say whale, it says a large sea creature.

And then we ask ourselves question #2, **What does Jesus and the New Testament teach on the subject?**

You remember that Jesus spoke about Jonah?

**MATTHEW 12:38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish (kētous) , so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

A comment on kētous. The new testament was written in Greek. The Greeks had a variety of words for fish, whales, sharks. Jesus doesn't use any of those words. He uses the word kētous. Which was a greek word used to describe a particular sea creature. I can send you the link if you want to read more. It is fascinating Jesus used a particular word. I think Jesus might be telling us what it was, an ancient extinct sea creature.

**So the Christian who holds to option 2 has a problem.** Do you see the problems? One, Jesus believed the story of Jonah. Jesus said it actually happened. And two, Jesus linked it to his death, burial and resurrection.

That is a problem if you think this story of Jonah a poem or myth.

So looking at the words of Jesus and the New Testament can be very helpful.

And then 3, **Is there any scientific evidence to support this Bible story?**

This isn't so much scientific but anecdotal. Have large sea creatures swallowed people? Yes, maybe, this is **lobster diver** who was swallowed by a whale and then spit back out.

I don't show you this slide to deny the miracles in this story.

Clearly, there is a lot of miraculous things happening. Supernatural, beyond the natural world. The storm stopped when Jonah was thrown overboard. A great sea creature just happened to swallow him. Jonah lived 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a great sea creature. And then that great sea creature just happened to spit him out on the beach.

Here is my challenge Christian. Have a big God. Don't think, I believe Jesus could raise from the dead, but Jonah couldn't survive this? Don't have a puny God.

There are Christians believe Jesus was resurrected. But they don't believe stories like Jonah. Don't ever put yourself in a position where you say Jesus is wrong. Jonah didn't happen. I know more than Jesus.

These are the filters I want to use as we approach a number of these topics. What does the actual Hebrew text teach? What did Jesus or the NT think about these things? And three is there any scientific evidence to corroborate this story?

You will hear a lot of science over the next 15 weeks.

## **VIDEO**

Alright lecture is over. It's **movie time**. That was phase 1. The lecture. Now phase 2. The video. There are some amazing videos that I want to introduce you to during the 15 classes. We will typically play just a portion of the video. And again, I will link to the video in the google doc.

I want to show you two quick interviews with two PhDs.

This is from *Is Genesis History*. It's excellent. I am going to show you a number of clips from this movie during the class.

Paul Nelson PhD Philosopher. He is going to talk about the two ways of approaching the world around us. What we talked about, the two different paradigms.

Steven Boyd PhD Hebraist. He is going to start unpacking what Genesis actually teaches. A topic we will dive into the next few class.

10-minute clip. Sit back and enjoy.

## CONCLUSION

That was great.

Alright, let's wrap it up. Why does this topic matter? As a Christian, there are profound implications for our faith and how we read the Bible.

And for the non-Christian, again, there are weighty implications for how you live your life.

Let's get into groups and discuss. Tom Bryan Jon Jim YG Friends others. Jump into a group. Maybe split up if the group is too big so everyone can discuss. Join the people sitting around you. Maybe just your family. Or go join your small group and split if it's too big. We have 15 minutes.

### Discussion Questions:

What stood out to you from the first lecture?

What do you hope to get out of this class?

What topic/question would you like to address?

Have you considered the implications of these different worldviews? Why does that matter?

What did you learn from the lesson about Jonah?

We will have a closing prayer at 8:00 and we will be done.