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Apologetics – Origin of Mankind – pastor Mark Alvis

I appreciate science and deeply respect the scientific method. Science deals with aspects of reality that can be observed, tested and verified. If an outcome produced in one lab cannot be reproduced in other labs, then something is amiss. But if a discovery is reproducible in other labs, then theories can be formed and tested. But natural science is not the only discipline that has guiding principles and rules attached to it. Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics also have agreed upon ways of understanding the Bible and its texts.

I am not a scientist, but I am constantly involved in studying the Bible, with the goal of rightly interpreting what it says. Most of the Bible is pretty straight forward – but other parts are debated by solid Christians. In order to rightly understand the Bible, I have some guiding assumptions that direct my thinking. My most basic rule is that truth does not contradict truth. Another guiding principle is that ALL the Bible is true. It is – as it claims to be – the Word of God – and God cannot lie. Therefore, if the way I am interpreting one part of the Bible causes it to contradict a truth taught in another part of the Bible, then I am not properly understanding one or possibly both of those portions of God’s Word. But I cannot be right about both passages if they contradict each other.

And so we are going to examine Genesis 1-9, with a Biblical truth in mind. That truth is that God’s Word declares incest to be wrong. Biological brothers and sisters should not marry each other and have kids.

Leviticus 18:1-24, “The LORD said to Moses, 2 ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “I am the LORD your God. 3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. 4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God . . . 6 No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD . . . 9 Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere . . . 24 Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.’”

The current theological thinking on incest is that it wasn’t wrong until God gave His written Law to Moses around 1400 B.C. Why do evangelical, Bible believing Christians believe that? Because our present interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, is that Adam and Eve were the first created human beings and all other humans came from them. If that is true, then God commanded the children of Adam and Eve to marry and produce children with their brothers and sisters – and then cousins and nephews – and so on and so on. In other words, God commanded incest before sin ever entered the world. And even after sin came into the world, incest was the only option on the table.

Question: Did people know that incest was wrong before God gave Moses His written Law? Answer: Yes.

Genesis 26:6-9, “So Isaac [who lived about 600 years before Moses] stayed in Gerar [a Philistine city]. 7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister,’ because he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife.’ He thought, ‘The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.’ 8 When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. 9 So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, ‘She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’? Isaac answered him, ‘Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.’”

How did Abimelech know that Rebekah was Isaac’s wife and not his sister? Because men are not supposed to do with their sisters what Isaac was doing with Rebekah.

Abraham’s nephew Lot lived about 700 years before God gave Moses His written law. And yet, the daughters of Lot had to get their father drunk in order to get pregnant by him. Why did they get their father drunk? Because they all knew incest was wrong.

Going back to Leviticus 18, none of the nations living in the land of Canaan had access to God’s written law. Only the Israelites had it at that time. Which means these people were severely judged for doing what they did not know was wrong and for doing what God supposedly commanded Adam and Eve’s children to do before sin entered the world. The people who lived in Canaan were guilty of sin because they had a God-given conscience and they had Godly people like Abraham, Melchizedek, Isaac and Jacob who lived in their midst for many years.

Let’s look at some other Scriptures that indicate people knew incest was wrong from the very beginning.

Romans 2:14-15, “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the [written] law, do by nature things required by the law . . . 15 they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness.”

Genesis 26:5 (spoken to Isaac, about his father Abraham, who lived 700 years before Moses), “. . . Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

Abraham did not have God’s written Law and yet he consistently [though not perfectly] obeyed God’s laws, decrees, commands and statutes.

Genesis 4:26, Seth [a son of Adam and Eve] also had a son and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call upon [or proclaim] the name of the LORD.”

Amos 3:7, “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” Abraham was a prophet of God – Genesis 20:7.

Amos 4:13, “He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man . . . the LORD God Almighty is his name.”

Westminster Confession of Faith [1647]
Chapter 4, Section 2

“God . . . created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His image, having the law of God written in their hearts, and the power to fulfill it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left with liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change.”

This was put together by a group of highly respected theologians in England over a five year period. This group of Godly scholars did not believe that people who lived before Moses – were clueless about incest being wrong.

Job 31:1, “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” Job, who also lived before Moses, knew that lust was wrong. I think it is safe to say that he also knew incest was wrong.

How many of you have been to see the model of Noah’s Ark? If you do, you will be told that all of us are the descendants of Noah. There are two major problems with that statement: (1) It demands incest. (2) If Noah’s flood was universal, then water once again covered all the earth and that makes God’s Word contradict itself. All of these following passages are speaking of when God made the dry land appear in Genesis 1:9-10:

Psalms 104:5-9, “He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 7 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.”

Jeremiah 5:22, “. . . I made the sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting barrier it cannot cross. The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail; they may roar, but they cannot cross it.”

Job 38:8-11, “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?’”

Proverbs 8:27-29, “I [wisdom] was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, 28 when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, 29 when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command”

Noah’s flood sounds universal, but so do God’s judgments in many Old Testament passages. It is important to understand that both the Hebrew and Greek words translated “earth” in our English

Bibles, also mean land. The context of the passage determines whether it is referring to the whole earth or just to the land of a particular country or area of the world.

II Samuel 22:1-18, “David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul [who was trying his best to kill David] . . . 5 the waves of death swirled about me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me . . . 7 In my distress I called to the LORD . . . From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears. 8 The earth [or the land of Israel] trembled and quaked, the foundations of the heavens shook; they trembled because he [God] was angry. 9 Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. 10 He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet [God coming on the clouds – meant that God was coming in judgment]. 11 He mounted the cherubim and flew [angels are always involved in times of judgment] . . . 15 He shot arrows [Philistine arrows] and scattered the enemies [referring to Saul and his army] . . . 16 The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth [or land] laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils. 17 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. 18 He rescued me from my powerful enemy [Saul], from my foes, who were too strong for me.”

II Samuel 22, which is repeated in Psalm 18, is not a worldwide judgment by God. See also Isaiah 13:1-17; Isaiah 34:1-10. These are all judgments that take place in the Middle East.

Let’s read Genesis 6:5-13, understanding that the word earth also means land,

“The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth [land of the Middle East where Noah lived], and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth [the land where Noah lived], and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth [the land where Noah lived] – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them.’ 8 But Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of the LORD . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God . . . 11 Now the earth [land] was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence [might makes right was the attitude of the day]. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth [land] had become, for all the people on the earth [the land] had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth [the land] is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth’ [the land].

The same Hebrew word for earth used in this section of Genesis is used in Jeremiah 51:49 to describe the nations plundered by Babylon: “Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon.” Babylon was considered a world empire. Look at the actual land area Babylon possessed [see map of Babylon]. Had Babylon slain people all over the planet earth? No. Babylon had slain people all over the Middle East.

In the New Testament, the Roman Empire was also considered a world empire [see map of the Roman Empire]. Listen to Luke 2:1, “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that

all the world [ESV] – or all the inhabited earth [NASB] should be registered.” The “world” or “the inhabited earth” in Luke 2:1 was referring to the Roman Empire.

Genesis 6:14-17, “So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high . . . 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth [land] to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on the earth [the land] will perish.”

When God said that He was going to destroy all life under the heavens, doesn't that have to mean the whole earth was submerged under water? No, because the Bible itself uses those very words when referring to a specific part of the world – rather than the entire planet. In Deuteronomy 2:25, God told Moses, “This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven” [referring to the nations around Egypt]. Acts 2:5, “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” That is referring to Jews from all over the Roman Empire. Colossians 1:23, “This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven . . .” Paul wrote that around A.D. 60. He is referring to the Roman Empire.

Let's now approach Genesis 1-3, with this backdrop in mind. Much of my understanding of this portion of God's Word is taken from the writing of Dr. Martin Poenie.

Genesis 1:25-28, “God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds [a reasonable conclusion is that God made many animals of each kind]. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, “Let us make man [the Hebrew word for man also means mankind], in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground . . . 28 God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’”

Genesis 2 progresses the story.

“When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens – 5 and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth [or land area where God decided to plant a garden] and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on [this area of] the earth and there was no man to work the ground [the people God created in Genesis 1 were made in God's image, but were childlike and may have gathered berries and other sources of food] 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground – 7 the LORD God formed the man [Adam] from the dust of the ground [Adam may have been taken from among the people on earth created in Genesis 1. It was still accurate to state that Adam was made from the dust of the earth, because all people are said to be made from the dust of the earth – see Genesis 18:27; Job 4:18-19] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man [Adam] became a living being [God did something special with Adam. He was chosen to be the head of humanity]. 8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed [to be the king]. 9 And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of

life [Adam had the unique opportunity to live without experiencing physical death] and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for the day you eat of it you will surely die’ . . . 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man.’ 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

Genesis 3 progresses the story further.

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened.”

Nothing is said to have happen when Eve ate of the fruit. But when Adam ate, the eyes of both were opened – and so were the eyes of every other person on earth at that time and in the days to follow. Adam and Eve did not die physically the day they sinned and ate of that fruit. They died spiritually. This was the first time in mankind’s history that spiritual death was experienced. When Adam sinned, all mankind sinned, in the sense that God imputed Adam’s sin to everyone else alive at that time and in the days ahead [God chose Adam to face this test and none of us would have done better]. This is the Federal Head concept of mankind’s fall in Adam. It is the classic Reformed viewpoint of how all fell in Adam. In a similar way, Christ the Second Adam, imputes His righteousness to all believers. With this understanding of Genesis 1-9, there was never a time when incest was practiced before the fall – nor was it necessary after the flood of Noah’s day.

Two verses that have been brought to my attention to supposedly prove that Adam and Eve were the first people on earth:

(1) Genesis 3:20, “Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.” The key to properly understanding this verse is found in Genesis 3:15. God speaks these words to Satan, “And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring and hers” Satan’s offspring are all unbelievers who never repent of their sin. In John 8:44, Jesus said to unbelieving Jews who were hardened in their unbelief, “You belong to your father the devil.” Eve’s offspring refer to all people, who by God’s grace, enter into spiritual life. Since the fall of mankind, the first resurrection people must experience is spiritual resurrection [Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 2:13]. Adam and Eve died spiritually [were separated from fellowship with God] the day they ate of the forbidden fruit. They initially tried to fix the nakedness of their guilt by making garments of fig leaves. This did not work and so God graciously provided covering for their nakedness from animal skins – which required the death and the shedding of blood by those animals [Genesis 3:21]. When Adam and Eve trusted in

God's provision for their sin, they were spiritually made alive, even though they still had to face physical death hundreds of years later. In Genesis 4, after unbelieving Cain [Satan's offspring] killed his righteous brother Abel [believing Eve's offspring], God gave her another believing son – Seth, who also had a believing son [Enosh]. In Genesis 4:26 we are told that, "At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD." Eve became the mother of all spiritually living people. Unbelievers are prisoners in Satan's domain of darkness. He is their spiritual father.

(2) Acts 17:26 [NIV], "From one man he made every nation of men" This verse literally reads, "and he made of one every nation of men" The King James Version, using the Textus Receptus manuscripts, reads as follows, "and hath made of one blood all nations of men" In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us [the Father, Son and Holy Spirit] make mankind in our image, in our likeness" From the one blood of mankind, God made every nation of men."

If we continue to insist that Adam and Eve were the first people on earth, then unbelievers will continue to marvel that Christians believe the holy God of the Bible commanded incest from Adam and Eve's children. Unbelievers know incest is wrong. So do believers. This teaching is very unsettling for new believers [and old]. We can do better. The Bible rightly interpreted does not require incest before or after the flood. For those who believe that God commanded incest for Adam and Eve's children – I have two questions: when did incest become wrong and why did it become wrong?