



1

Part I: Bible

- 1. Communities of Origin
- 2. Creationism
- 3. Finding Answers
- 4. My Church Lied to Me
- 5. Finding Deeper Faith with C. S. Lewis

Part II: Time

- 6. God's Weekly Planner
- 7. Keeping Time
- 8. God's Priorities
- 9. Rethinking Time and the Bible
- 10. Finding Deeper Faith with Arundhati Roy and G. K. Chesterton

2

Chapter 9: Rethinking Time and the Bible

- Recall that last time we discussed God's weekly planner of the creation of the universe. The universe is 13.8 billion years old.
- Fusion forming heavier elements takes about 6 billion years.
- Homo Sapiens has existed for about 15 seconds.
- Stump looks at genealogies given in the Bible.
- These have lead literalist Bible scholars to believe creation occurred between 6 and 10 thousand years ago.
- The variations are because some of the records might be incomplete.
- "God wasn't inspiring people to write these texts with the intention of smuggling some modern science into them." Page 86

3

- "So what is the Bible communicating about time and history?"
- Look at the genealogies in Genesis 5 - something is fishy
- Ages are impossible, Adam 930, Methuselah 969
- 30 ages listed in Genesis 5 – all of them end in 0, 2, 5, 7, or 9
- Chances of that are 1 in 100,000,000
- All of the numbers are combinations of 60 and 7
- Methuselah's age when Lamech was born $187 = 60+60+60+7$
- Adam's age when Seth was born $130=(60+60)\text{yrs}+(60+60)\text{months}$
- "We don't really know why such combinations might have been important or what they conveyed." Page 87

4

- Old Testament scholar Richard Middleton shared a number of interesting insights, including the use of gematria, which is the practice of assigning a numerical value to letters.
- “Let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number for a person. Its number is 666” (Rev. 13:18).
- Many Bible scholars believe this was a covert reference to Emperor Nero, whose name written as “Nero Caesar” in Hebrew has the numerical equivalent of letters that add up to 666.
- Middleton says this kind of gematria is also driving the genealogy in Matthew 1. It lists three sets of fourteen generations, and the reason is that it is all based on the name David. Page 88

5

- John Walton (retired from Wheaton) wrote *The Lost World of Genesis One*.
- Walton believes that God is ultimately responsible for creating the material of the universe, but he doesn't think this is what the creation texts are talking about. For the ancient Near Eastern mindset, to create something was to assign it a function.
- So when the text says that God created the heavens and the Earth, the claim was not that there was no material — the atoms of hydrogen and so on — and then all of a sudden that material came into being. Genesis 1:1 itself seems to begin with material already there. Modern English translations note this by rendering the original Hebrew this way: “When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep.”

6

- Walton thinks that asking the text to answer “How old is the earth?” will give irrelevant/misleading information.
- You go to a play but arrive 30 minutes late. Ask the person beside you “How did the play begin?”
- “The play was written in 1938. It was a Pulitzer Prize candidate ...”
- “No, no. How did the play begin here?”
- “The set was constructed by Morris Construction ...”
- “That’s not what I’m asking. What have I missed so far?”
- “The cast was chosen by ...”
- “Ugh! What has happened since the curtain went up?”
- With the creation accounts from the Bible we shouldn’t try to force them into a few sentences of what they were really trying to say.

7

Chapter 10: Finding Deeper Faith with Arundhati Roy and G. K. Chesterton

- Stump had Arundhati Roy’s book recommended to him on a trip to southwestern India.
- Her novel *The God of Small Things* was set in that area. The book won the Booker prize in 1997.
- The book helped Stump understand that God isn’t in a hurry and isn’t concerned with time and efficiency. One of her characters talked about the 4.6 billion year old earth as though it were a 46 year old woman. She was only 11 when single-celled animals appeared and was already 45 by the time dinosaurs arrived.

8

- The second insight from Roy can be seen in the title of her book: God delights in the small things.
- Visiting India is often described as an assault on the senses—the colors, the sounds, the smells, and the tastes all seem enhanced. Roy describes these masterfully. But it is not just to add color to the story; these are the important things.

9

- God was content to let the children of Israel wander in the desert for forty years before coming into the Promised Land.
- Centuries passed before the fullness of time was achieved and Jesus came to set things right.
- Christians have been waiting for two thousand years for the promised return of Christ to usher in the eschaton.
- Those are not the plans of an engineer, who would have tried to minimize the time needed to achieve the goals.

10

- Stump uses the analogy of baking your own bread, in his case sourdough bread.
- “But my point is that just as a baker finds joy in the process of creating from scratch, so too might God enjoy the process of creating over time. God might even prefer the end product of that process to something instantaneously made.” Page 97
- Stump also uses the example of contemporary artist Makoto Fujimura.
- He describes his work as “slow art.” He doesn’t go to the art store and buy paper and paint. He makes his own paper, and he pulverizes minerals into pigments for painting.

11

Stump quotes G. K. Chesterton’s book *Orthodoxy* (published 1908) “Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, “Do it again”; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, “Do it again” to the sun; and every evening, “Do it again” to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical ENCORE.”

12

- Over time we've learned more and more about our universe
- It's difficult to maintain that all this is only for the sake of us humans. Most of it has almost no connection to us and is beyond the realm of what we'll ever be able to experience. So why did God make it? The answer, I think, is that God delights in all of it for its own sake. Page 98
- "God delights not just in stopping to smell the roses, but in stopping where there are no roses yet and watching them grow." Page 101
- "How do we deal with the urgency that has been built into us to "work while it is yet day."