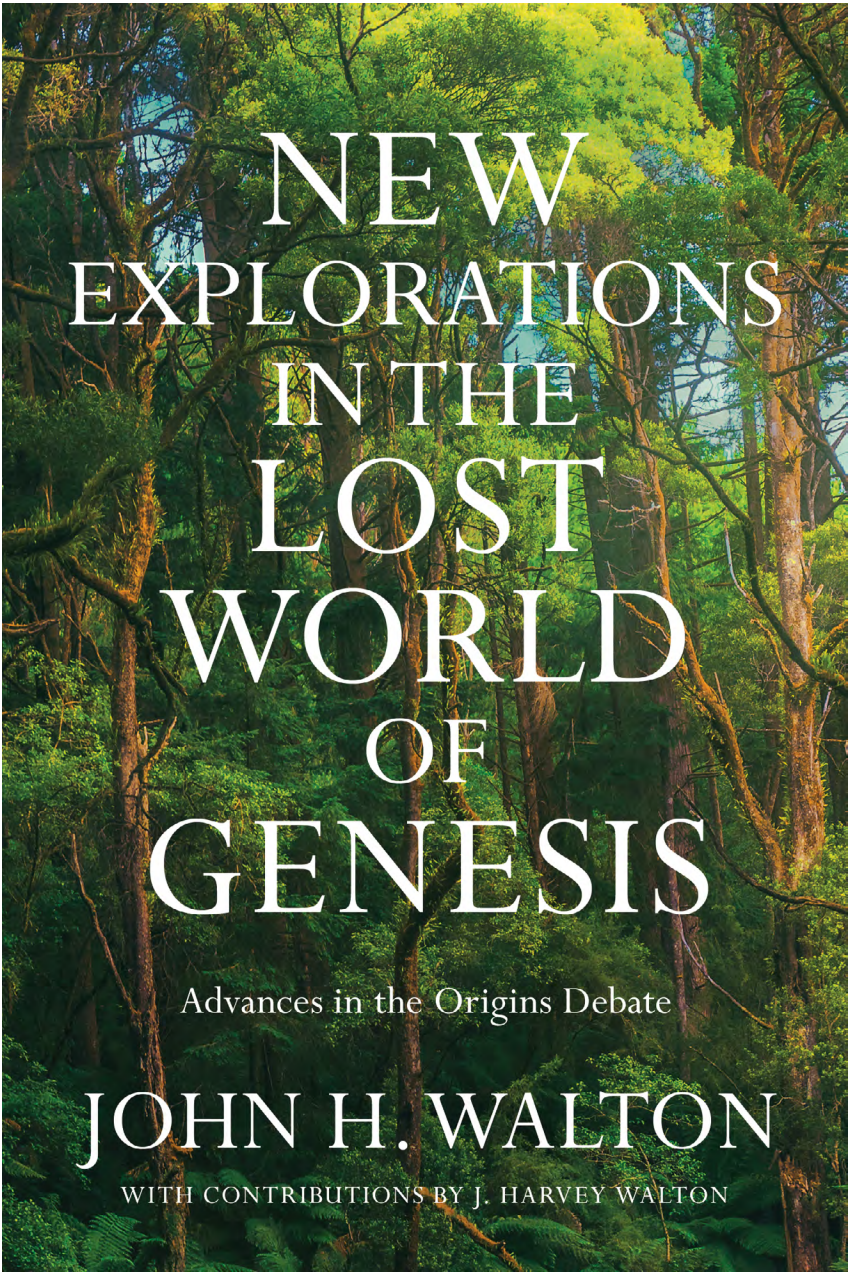

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1

Introduction

How We Got Here

The *Lost World of Genesis One* appeared in 2009. Many of the ideas there had already been introduced earlier in my commentary on Genesis.[1] Two years later, a full academic monograph, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, was published to fill in the details for a scholarly audience. Two other Lost World books pertaining to Genesis then followed, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (2014) and *The Lost World of the Flood* (2018).

For the story of how the ideas took shape, however, we have to begin a couple of decades earlier. I was raised in a family where the Bible mattered. My four siblings and I learned biblical content early and well. Our context was nondenominational, traditional, and evangelical, and therefore passively young-earth creationists (though others in that same context would have been more militant on that count). No other options besides a young earth were considered, but it was not a big issue. That continued to be my default position even through much of my time teaching at Moody Bible Institute (1981–2001). Nevertheless, alternative ideas were subtly taking shape in my mind.

As early as my master's work (Wheaton College, 1975), I had taken an interest in Genesis as I began to learn Hebrew and study the Old Testament academically. When I got into my doctoral program (Hebrew Union College, 1976–1981), I began to understand the

[1] John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

untapped significance provided by interacting with the cultures and literature of the ancient world. I studied Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Aramaic, and translated texts as well as studying the history and culture. As I did so, the cognitive environment of the ancient world unfolded. I was particularly interested in comparative studies that brought an understanding of the ancient world alongside the Old Testament to unpack cultural ideas inherent in the text. This led to my decision to do my dissertation on the Tower of Babel. In that work, I first began to combine a close, fresh reading of the Hebrew text with an exploration into the world of the ancient Near East. I investigated what type of tower this was, how such towers functioned, and what they stood for. I also researched what it meant to "make a name" in the Bible particularly and in the ancient Near East in general.[2]

It was never my intention nor inclination to suggest that the biblical authors borrowed and adapted literature from Babylon or Egypt (though many working in comparative studies have those preconceptions). I was more intrigued by the light that the literature shed on how people in the ancient world thought differently from us in so many ways. Besides issues of general comparison, I also wanted to interact with ancient Near Eastern background information as I performed exegetical analysis on particular passages such as the Tower of Babel to see what additional insight our knowledge of the ancient world could provide.

When I began teaching at Moody Bible Institute, I regularly taught a book-study course in Genesis. When asked, I used to tell my classes that I held an "uncomfortable young-earth position." Young earth had been my default position since childhood, and I had read widely about other alternatives. I found proposals such as the gap theory or the day-age theory to be inconsistent with the grammar and syntax of the Hebrew text.[3] So I remained in the young-earth camp because I could

[2]Some of the results of my dissertation research, along with how those ideas have developed over the years, can be found in *LWF*.

[3]Details and analysis can be found in Walton, *Genesis*.

not see another option that would preserve what I considered essential to the demands of biblical authority. If I were to stretch the language in the ways required by those views, I would no longer be tracking with the authors of Scripture. Even so, I described myself as uncomfortable with the position because all the research and reading that I had done in Genesis and in the ancient Near East increasingly gave me an unsettled feeling. I became convinced that I was missing something important, but I could not put my finger on it. I struggled to put all the pieces together—careful reading of Hebrew, ancient Near Eastern perspective, and commitment to biblical authority—and I just could not work it out. Were questions about the age of the earth tracking with the authors of Scripture? That seemed dubious to me, but I could not identify an alternative path.

During those years at Moody, I also used to take my fourth-semester Hebrew students through Genesis 1, and that is the context in which all the pieces finally fell into place for me. It actually happened during a class session. I was putting them through their paces in the Hebrew text and had posed my typical set of questions. I pointed out to them that the seven days of creation began with elements such as earth and water already there (Gen 1:2). We talked about the fact that as the days began, the activities focused on issues such as time (day and night) and fecundity (sprouting of plants)—not on things such as terraforming mountains and lakes. I finally asked aloud the very simple, yet complexly significant question, "What kind of creation account is this, anyway?" And the shoe dropped. All the pieces that I had been working with over decades of study fell into place. I had finally framed the right question, and we cannot get good answers if we are not asking the right questions.

In a lecture in 1856, Louis Pasteur was talking about how discovery works, in light of the fact that so often it looks like it happened suddenly, by accident—by chance. He proposed, "In the fields of observation, chance favors the mind that is prepared." Decades of preparation

had led up to that moment in Genesis class, and very suddenly, a new approach became not only possible but almost obvious and inevitable. My modern context and my presuppositions had prevented me from recognizing that there were other ways to think about creation and that those needed to be explored. The rest of the class period (not to mention the rest of my life) was spent unpacking the new approach opened up by new questions.[4]

As the publications began appearing, I was increasingly asked to speak on these topics. By now I have given presentations hundreds of times, from classes at Wheaton to lectures on both Christian and secular campuses across the country, from churches and pastors' conferences to academic conventions, from lectures in dozens of countries around the world to over a hundred podcasts and radio interviews. The books have additionally been translated into a number of other languages.

It has been a great privilege to have these opportunities, but perhaps one of the most important benefits is that as I have strived to communicate new ideas clearly and have interacted with audiences (whether friendly, nervous, confused, or even passively hostile), I have *learned*. I have found that some terminology was not as clear as it needed to be, so I have chosen alternatives. I have figured out what aspects of the presentation needed to be addressed at the beginning and how to approach some of the more controversial issues, anticipating the struggles my audiences will be experiencing. I have gotten better at packaging challenging ideas in ways that people can receive them. I have heard just about every question imaginable and have found that there is some consistency to them.

I also continue to learn how important tone is. I have never been a confrontational person; I am not an in-your-face debater who is going

[4]Only three or four students were enrolled in that course, and two of them are now valued colleagues, Ryan Peterson (Talbot) and Adam Miglio (Wheaton—his office is right next to mine). We often think back to that day.

to take down the other position. I want to understand where people are coming from that may lead them to disagree with me. I understand the young-earth position (since I was raised that way) and respect that those who hold it feel they are defending the integrity of Scripture. I do not want to dampen that passion. Occasionally those passions turn into anger, and I have learned that the angrier an antagonist gets, the more gentle and conciliatory I need to be. Hostility is best met with graciousness, which is not always easy. I have tried to find ways to express that I am still learning and growing and that there is still much that continuing scholarship can contribute to broaden and widen our understanding of the Genesis account. A refrain that I often repeat is that it is not my intention to present the "right" answer and to expect everyone to adopt my conclusions. Instead, my job is to be a faithful interpreter and to put information on the table that others may not have so that they can make more informed decisions. I have learned that even when I have heard a question dozens of times, I need to listen carefully to the way it is posed to try to understand what concerns the questioner has.

People sometimes get concerned that if interpretation requires a technical level of information, that it makes the Bible inaccessible to them. I have heard the complaint that the need for linguistic, literary, and especially cultural information effectually takes the Bible out of their hands and makes them dependent on specialists.[5] The fact is, however, that we depend on specialists all the time for information that is important to us. Andrew Brown makes the point convincingly:

> Now I defend the right of the thinking person to be a self-starter in any area of knowledge and not wait humbly at the gate to be invited in and shown around. We cannot remain at the mercy of the academic elite. But when I suspect something is wrong with

[5]I intend to address this issue in more detail in my forthcoming book *The Crisis of Biblical Authority* (InterVarsity Press).

> my car, I could prop up the hood and, with my limited insight into automotive engineering, begin to unplug anything that looks plugged in, clean anything that looks dirty, and pour some liquid into any convenient-looking opening. It would be better to open a service manual for the car before attempting any remedies beyond checking the oil level. Even better, I could consult my local mechanic, tap into his years of experience, and learn some of the "theory" of car repair and maintenance.[6]

Why should we not make the same sort of efforts to read the Bible well?

Some have accused me of relying on hidden, secret information. But the information I use is not secret or mystical; it is actually recoverable from ancient literature that I seek to make accessible. Some have accused me of elitism, promulgating the idea that only the scholars can interpret the text. My response is that we all have gifts to contribute to the church, and scholarship is the one that I have to give. The idea of the church is that we are all dependent on one another for what we each have to contribute. That is what spiritual gifts are all about. I am not hoarding what I know; I am sharing it. I have tried to incorporate all of these experiences into the writing of this book.

Beyond taking advantage of opportunities to communicate ideas, I have also been trying to develop deeper understanding and new ideas through ongoing research and thinking. This has led to the continual development of new insights and perspectives. These have come not only through my own research and thinking but in interaction with conversation partners of all sorts. Probably no one has had more influence on my thinking than my son Jon (publishing under J. Harvey Walton). His influence began when he was in his midteens and I was writing my Genesis commentary. We would often walk the dog together in the evenings, and he would ask what passage or issue I had

[6]Andrew Brown, *Recruiting the Ancients for the Creation Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2023), 11.

been working on that day. In the resulting conversations, he asked important questions and offered amazingly insightful observations. Such exchanges continued over the years as he read my work, interacted with it, and eventually collaborated with me on several books. As he did his doctoral dissertation at St Andrews on Genesis 2–4, he constantly challenged me to think in new directions, and many of his ideas are incorporated in this book. That is not to say that we always agree; it only means that what each one of us brings to the conversation strengthens the whole. Furthermore, when our ideas or conclusions clash, we then seek ways to qualify and adjust—an extremely beneficial process of give and take.

Such is the story of how we have arrived at this point, now twenty-five years after the first emergence of an idea and fifteen years after the publication of the first of the Lost World books. People frequently ask how the "Lost World" label came about, and I am quick to admit that not only was it not my idea but that I was somewhat skeptical about it when the publisher suggested it. As I understand it, the initial suggestion was made by Dan Reid, then academic editor at InterVarsity Press. The marketing people liked it, and I eventually agreed, despite continuing reservations. It turned out to be a great decision, as it has communicated how in these books I have been trying to uncover an understanding of the Old Testament that has been lost to us through time as culture has shifted slowly but surely, inevitably and dramatically. Culture has evolved from those ancient ways of thinking to produce the ways we think today, and memory of those cultures has faded. That is the lost world that needs to be recovered for us to gain the full benefit of Scripture that, as I maintain, has been written for us but was not written to us.

What Is This Book About?

The idea of this book is to update the discussions pertaining to the lost world of Genesis (primarily Gen 1–3, since the *Lost World of the Flood*

just came out in 2018). In most cases this does not revise the previously published material but supplements it, though on occasion readers might find a shift in emphasis or terminology that represents some rethinking. Unavoidably, yes, there are topics about which I have changed my mind (summarized in the conclusions chapter).

We will proceed in eight parts:

Chapter 2: Methodology: How should we approach the text?

Chapter 3: Genesis 1: What kind of creation account is it? (functional ontology)

Chapter 4: Genesis 1: The seventh day and its significance (temple and rest)

Chapter 5: Genesis 2: The garden and the trees (sacred space and priestly roles)

Chapter 6: Genesis 2: Adam and Eve (archetypes, dust and rib)

Chapter 7: Genesis 3: The serpent and the fall

Chapter 8: Genesis 3: The pronouncement and aftermath

Chapter 9: Genesis and Science

In each part we will approach the material in several sections:

1. Summary of the position presented in the previously published material
2. Presentation of new insights, clarifications, illustrations, and so on—these are the new explorations to which the title of this book refers
3. Answering frequently asked questions and addressing common critiques, particularly regarding traditional Christian interpretation and theological ideas. This list of sixty FAQs has been developed from question-and-answer sessions after lectures, from course presentations as I engage with students, from emails that I receive most days, and from published academic reviews.

That third section is an important aspect of due diligence. As anyone would expect, there are those who disagree with the Lost World proposals, whether in the realm of methodology or exegesis. One cannot talk about these seminal passages and expect that no one will have objections. I do not mind that people disagree with me. We can each present our evidence as best we can and let people decide what they think is most convincing. I find that I struggle more when reviewers misrepresent me, speculate on my motivations, draw conclusions about my thinking that are inaccurate, or simply fail to grasp the nuances that I am presenting. Sadly, some have persisted in repeating their points publicly even after I have confronted them with how inaccurately they understand my view. In this book I will address their concerns but not them personally. The issues that they raise will be dealt with topically as they come up in the book.

My hope for this book is that it will (1) help those who have adopted the Lost World perspective to understand it more fully, (2) help those who have been confused and uncertain to gain more clarity, and (3) help those who have been resistant and critical to perhaps correct what they believe about me or about the position so that the conversation can move forward in more healthy ways, even if they continue to disagree. In the end, I hope that as I offer more depth of understanding and more alternatives, Christians will come to understand that faithful interpretation can still result in a variety of opinions on interpretation of specific passages. Our common ground in the authority of Scripture unites us, and the gospel message is clear for any reader, young or old.

Synopsis of the Message of Genesis 1–3

Before moving into the individual chapters, it will be helpful for me to offer a summary of how I view the message of these early chapters of Genesis. From an academic perspective, this could be referred to as the rhetorical strategy of the discourse. Here I would like to summarize what I believe the author (= final compiler) of Genesis was

trying to communicate to his audience. For me, this text-in-context analysis represents the authoritative message to be found in the affirmations of this section of Scripture. This is a summary I will unpack in the rest of the book.

Genesis 1:1 offers a descriptive phrase explaining the topic that the chapter is going to address, and Genesis 1:2 describes the opening situation. As the story begins, no order has yet been established on the earth. I call this condition nonorder; others call it chaos. It is not an evil situation but describes the undesirable default condition that order bringing will rectify. The scene is set for creation to take place.

In the ancient world, people did not primarily think of God's acts of creation of the cosmos in terms of making objects; they thought of it as bringing order. Order is understood as a stable and secure situation where everything is working the way it is supposed to work. It is an ideal but not perfection and can be relative. I believe the seven-day creation account describes that ordering activity. The main message of this account is that God brings order with a purpose in mind. Two aspects of this purpose can be inferred. The first pertains to God and humanity and is the highlight of day six. As image bearers, humanity's designated role is to work alongside God as partners in bringing order. This implies a working relationship between God and humanity. The second purpose pertains to God and the cosmos and is the highlight of day seven. It eventually takes shape in the temple. In the ancient world, divine rest took place in temples and reflected divine presence and rule. This implied God's intention to be present among humanity.

Though neither relationship nor presence is fully explained in the seven-day account and therefore cannot be identified as the author's main message, the foundation for them is laid here. It is worth noting that both elements, relationship and presence, are of interest in the wider ancient Near East, but the Old Testament develops both in very different directions. For Israel, God's presence is not a mechanism by which his needs can be met—he has no needs. The idea of relationship

with God is also qualitatively different from what was found in the ancient Near East. Nothing compares to the idea that Israel is Yahweh's treasured possession or to the metaphor of marriage that defines the relationship.[7] Again, I admit that these are not developed in these early chapters of Genesis, but they would have been in the mind of the Israelite audience, as is demonstrated by the rest of the Old Testament.[8] Both relationship and presence are going to find their focus in the covenant patronage relationship that leads to the divine presence specifically locating itself in the temple in Jerusalem. Genesis 1–11 is leading to the covenant (Gen 12), where relationship and, eventually (in Ex 40), presence, will become the centerpiece of God's work to bring order to the world, but here those ideas are only nascent. These ideas will eventually take shape as the unfolding of his plans and purposes to bring about his kingdom.

I am suggesting neither that Israel was given the mission to promote these ideas nor that it is the mission of the church to do so. Rather, I suggest that relationship and presence represent God's sovereign purposes, and he calls on his people of all ages to participate in them with him. For preexilic Israel, this took the form of a stable and secure political structure. For postexilic Israel, it projected restoration to a stable and secure situation. For us, it calls us to bring honor to the

[7]The relationship proceeds from humanity as coworkers, to Israel as vassal and client, to Israel as a patron in the covenant. The ANE also has variants on these relationships. Eventually, however, the OT will see that covenant relationship as taking on a level of *ḥesed* that transcends what we find in the ANE. *Ḥesed* is present when someone is acting to fulfill an obligation, formal or informal, stated and agreed on or inherent in the normal expectations of human interaction or protocol. It involves conforming to an understood expectation and therefore addressing propriety. The closest English rendering is *commitment*. As a patronage agreement, the covenant relationship of Yahweh with Israel is the foundation for such mutual behavior and does not exist in the same way elsewhere in the ANE—that is, between gods and people groups. Likewise, though the presence of deity in a temple is a foundation for worship in the ANE, in Israel it transcended those ideas in that Yahweh's presence was not just a mechanism for meeting his needs.

[8]We should not try to view Genesis through the eyes of the characters (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob) but through the eyes of the narrator and his audience. Regardless of its date of composition, Genesis reflects Israelites writing to Israelites.

reputation of God in our world as his Spirit indwells us, facilitated by the relationship made available in Christ. My current view of the rhetorical strategy of Genesis 2–4 has aligned with that developed by J. Harvey Walton, here summarized by him.

EXCURSUS 1: RHETORICAL STRATEGY OF GENESIS 2–4

J. HARVEY WALTON

The subject of the discussion in the Primordial History (Gen 1–11) is human order and where the highest state of desirable human existence can or cannot be found. The search for order in Genesis is conceptually very similar to the search for meaning in Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth searches for meaning in all the places that his culture expected to be able to find it—hard work, wisdom, righteousness (the "fear of the Lord"), pleasure, wealth, legacy—and comes up empty every time. He nonetheless affirms that all these things are better to have than not, even if none of them ultimately provide the remedy to meaninglessness. The analysis of Ecclesiastes includes several anecdotes about (presumably) real people (i.e., Eccles 2:4-9; 4:7-8; 9:13-16), some of whom would have been persons of historical significance (the king in Eccles 1:1, 12), but the book is not interested in any of these people in and of themselves. The story of their achievements or lack thereof is instead a commentary on the value and ultimate futility of whatever they are trying to do. The goal is not to describe what people did but to describe the inability of their efforts to create meaning.

In the same way, Genesis includes anecdotes about (presumably) real people whose lives and actions may have had some kind of historical significance, but the purpose of the text is not to record those lives and actions but rather to comment on the search for order. The people depicted in Genesis 1–11 are trying to achieve order in all the ways that ancient Near Eastern conventional wisdom thought it could be done, just like Ecclesiastes is trying to achieve meaning in the way conventional wisdom said it could be done. The text of Genesis depicts humans failing as a commentary on where order cannot be found.

Genesis 2–4 identifies several attempts to establish order, which include living like the gods as immortals in the divine realm, being given the gift of agriculture, being given a community and the ability to propagate that community through future generations, being given divine enlightenment (becoming "like the gods, knowing good and evil"), wearing clothes (a distinctive sign of becoming human), building cities, establishing the arts of civilization, and recounting noteworthy achievements. None of these things turn out to be capable of achieving order, even though most of them are better to have than not, just as things such as wisdom, wealth, and the fear of the Lord do not achieve meaning in Ecclesiastes but are better to have than not. The Genesis narrative emphasizes failure by depicting a nonordered, undesirable condition that persists even after the attempt to achieve order has been put into place. Genesis 2–4 is therefore not a documentary about how a specific attempt to achieve order failed; it is an *evaluation* of where order can or cannot be found and of what kinds of attempts will be futile for those attempting to achieve it.

As the text proceeds to the subsequent *toledoth*s,[9] other potential sources of order that are considered and rejected are annihilation of humanity (the flood), establishment of national-political entities (Gen 10), and bringing God's presence down by their own initiative (Tower of Babel) to fuel a system of mutual codependence (people meeting God's needs so that he will meet their needs).[10]

In this view, these accounts are not about sins and are not describing institutions or behaviors that are sinful (though some of them might incidentally be so); they are in conversation with the ancient world from which they derive as they consider what it is that can achieve order in the world. These values are subverted as they are evaluated as insufficient. These are also the pathways to order that continue to be attractive to us today, which makes the cautionary message of Genesis vital in modern discourse. The message in Genesis 2–11 is not to tell readers (ancient or modern) where to find order; this section of Genesis helps them (and us) to see where we will not find it.

As I will discuss in the pages below, the text-in-context intention of Genesis 3 is not to document the first sin or to provide an explanation for evil in the world. Instead, it shows how humanity is characterized by a desire for godlike autonomy, taking the fruit of the knowledge on their own initiative in the face of divine warning to the contrary, as they seek order on their own terms. I understand their act as an appropriation of a divine capacity now driven by self-will. Their order-bringing attempts going forward are not only inadequate but marred, tainted by self-will. This is evident in Cain, Lamech, the "sons of God," the flood generation, and the tower builders.

[9] *Toledoth* is the Hebrew term that is used to introduce the sections of Genesis. Traditionally translated "generations" ("These are the generations of . . ") now often "This is the account of . . ."

[10] These ideas are developed in J. Harvey Walton, "Knowing Good and Evil: Values and Presentation in Genesis 2–4" (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2023), http://hdl.handle.net/10023/27738, though he has a different interpretation of the Tower of Babel.

When created in God's image, the plan was that humanity was delegated to partner with God to continue the process of bringing order in the world—God's order according to God's plans and purposes, eventuating in his kingdom.[11] In the Old Testament the focus is primarily on the kingdom of God based in Jerusalem. Eventually, however, particularly in the prophets and specifically in Daniel, the kingdom takes on a more universal shape, though without losing the central role of Israel. When humans choose to be like God, it reflects a desire and determination to be order bringers out on their own, with their own benefits in view. This can be inferred since it is then what humanity does in Genesis 2–11, what Israel does throughout the Old Testament, and what we all do in every place and every time. People are always happy for God's help and want to recruit him to their efforts, but the focus was and is on their own perspectives. Genesis 3 is not so much about how that all started; it is about how that always has characterized all of humanity. We have all strayed as we go our own way. It is not so much about human failure as about our misguided efforts to seek our own benefit. As the text devalues ancient Near Eastern options for achieving order (such as being godlike), it also deconstructs humanity's universal inner drive toward self-will.[12] As such, these texts do not offer prescriptions or commands; they offer wisdom.

Humanity has universally chosen this path to forge order on its own. This does not mean that our institutions of order (civilization, cities, family, community) are bad or contrary to the will of God. The problem is that we place too much confidence in them and too easily exploit them to our own ends. Yet, God is at work carrying out his plans and purposes despite our waywardness. He does so through the covenant—his plan for establishing relationship and his presence

[11]In the ANE this was the role of the king, and it was generally assumed that the king's decisions would be endorsed by the god. In Israel, however, there was little such optimism about God and humanity being in sync.

[12]To be clear, J. Harvey Walton's view proposes the idea of deconstructing ANE values, but he would strongly disagree with the idea that it also deconstructs the exercise of self-will.

among the people he created as he works toward the establishment of his kingdom.[13] God's plans and purposes eventuate in his kingdom; our plans and purposes eventuate in our kingdom. This contrast is picked up much later in the Lord's Prayer—"Your kingdom come" (implied: not ours), "your will be done" (implied: not ours). The covenant strategy is what Genesis 1–11 is laying the foundation for, and it gets there by devaluing the usual ways and places that ancient (and often modern) people seek order.

As is evident from the above synopsis, I do not see Genesis as feeding a metanarrative of sin and salvation, a view that has long been common in Christian thinking. The long-standing problem for theologians has been that it is difficult to demonstrate that the Israelite authors and audiences were aware of such a metanarrative. Instead, I maintain that these opening chapters of Genesis, while not articulating a metanarrative, use the rejection of ancient ideals of order to launch a different metanarrative, one that centers on relationship and presence, particularly as it is reflected in the covenant.[14] Interest in these issues is pervasive in the Old Testament, evident, for example, in the covenant expression that Yahweh will walk among them and be with them, that he will be their God and they will be his people (Lev 26:11-12; 1 Kings 8:57; Ezek 34:30; 37:26-28). Even prior to the covenant, these factors are evident in Genesis 5:24, where Enoch walks with God (relationship and presence). This focus extends into the metanarrative of the New Testament as well (Jn 1:14; Mt 28:20;

[13]It should be noted that Israel is not a replacement image of God. Humanity, as the image of God, was delegated to be order bringers. Israel, as the people of God though the covenant, were incorporated into the divine identity as God identified himself with Israel, and they were with him. In this they are not new order bringers; rather, they have God's order imposed on them (Torah).

[14]I call this "Immanuel theology." For my sermon explaining it, see "Immanuel Theology: What God Has Always Wanted- Dr. John Walton," YouTube, March 14, 2019, 40:49, www.youtube.com/watch?v=knyUtOf_O6s. For a published summary, see John H. Walton, *Old Testament Theology for Christians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 27-28, or John Walton and Kim Walton, *Bible Story Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 28-30.

2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3). The incarnation extends the presence of God, and the death and resurrection of Jesus provide for relationship in a full way. Pentecost features the presence of God in his people as a seal of the relationship forged with them through Christ. New heaven and earth are characterized by God's presence and relationship with him. This can therefore be identified as a canonical metanarrative, though the New Testament did not launch it; it just gave it new expressions as God's plans and purposes unfolded in Jesus. Genesis 1–3 launched the core ideas, which were then developed in the context of Yahweh's covenant with Israel.

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