

EXCERPT



New Explorations in the Lost World of Genesis *Advances in the Origins Debate*

April 15, 2025 | \$25.00, 272 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0491-3

John H. Walton (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament, emeritus, at Wheaton College and Graduate School. His many books include *The Lost World of Genesis One* and *Wisdom for Faithful Reading*.

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. 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 creationist (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 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.

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.

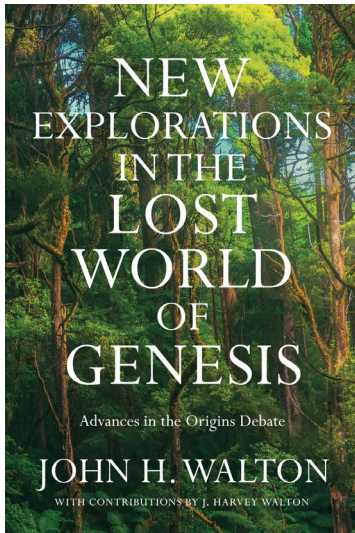
When I began teaching at Moody Bible Institute, I regularly taught a book-study course in Genesis. When asked, I used to tell my classes that I held an "uncomfortable young-earth position." Young earth had been my default position since childhood, and I had read widely about other alternatives. I found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



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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 (Genesis 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.

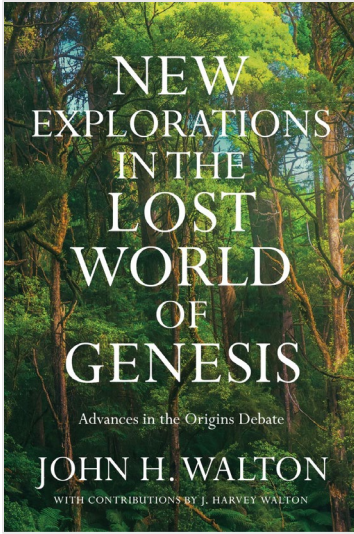
—Taken from the introduction, “How We Got Here”



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DETAILS



New Explorations in the Lost World of Genesis *Advances in the Origins Debate*

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For over a decade, John Walton's books *The Lost World of Genesis One* and *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* have shaped readers' understanding of the ancient Near Eastern world and its implications for modern scientific origins debates. Engaging the latest scholarship as well as questions that his proponents and critics alike have raised, *New Explorations in the Lost World of Genesis* provides a relevant update that will benefit students, professors, and pastors as they continue to explore questions of origins and their implications for the Christian life.

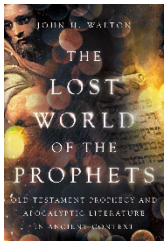
The Lost World Series

There are some historical or biblical issues that are inherently controversial—which is why they remain issues of debate. The books in the Lost World Series follow the pattern set by Bible scholar John H. Walton as they bring a fresh, close reading of the Hebrew text to an accessible discussion of the topic at hand.

Addressed through propositions that move the reader through a logical sequence of the principal points of discussion, these volumes are informed by knowledge of the ancient Near Eastern literature and cognitive environment, and undergirded by a consistently applied hermeneutic. Authors seek to find God's authoritative message in the text represented in the communication as understood by the human source (speaker or writer) and his audience—working out the principle that the Bible is written for us, but not to us.

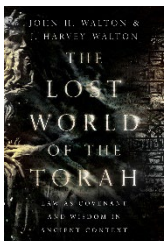
The intention with the Lost World Series is not to offer the single “correct” interpretation of the given text. These books seek, instead, to provide an interpretation based on a conviction that the Bible is the Word of God—Scripture that speaks truly. The goal is not to convert the reader to the author's conclusions, or even to persuade the reader to adopt their way of thinking. Instead, this series seeks to bring information to the reader's attention that has helped the authors as they have struggled with the passages.

In addition to this new release, *New Explorations in the Lost World of Genesis*, titles in the Lost World Series include:



The Lost World of the Prophets: Old Testament Prophecy and Apocalyptic Literature in Ancient Context
by John H. Walton | February 27, 2024 | \$22.00, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0489-0

Are the prophets speaking about their own times, about our present, or about some still-unrealized future? Applying his signature method, John Walton provides a clear, helpful guide to the nature of biblical prophecy and apocalyptic literature that will help us avoid potential misuse and reclaim the message of the prophets for our lives.



The Lost World of the Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context
by John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton | February 26, 2019 | \$25.99, 288 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5241-3

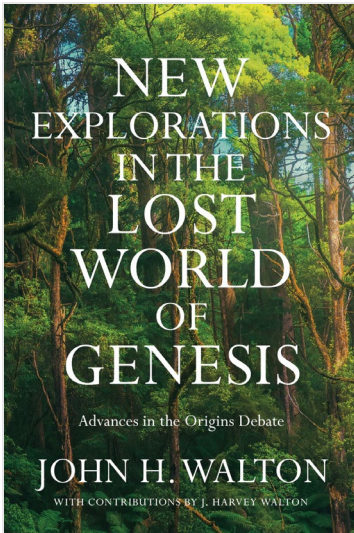
To modern eyes, what we call the biblical law, or Torah, seems either odd beyond comprehension (not eating lobster) or positively reprehensible (executing children). Using a consistent methodology to look at the Torah through the lens of the ancient Near East, Walton and Walton offer a restorative understanding that will have dramatic effects in interpreting the text and in discerning the significance of the Torah for today.



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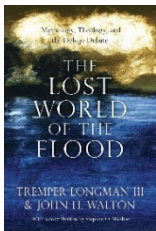
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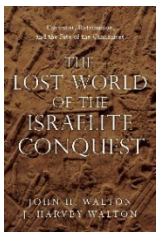
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The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debater

by John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III | April 3, 2018 | \$22.99, 208 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5200-0

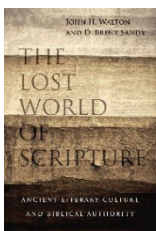
The Genesis flood account has been probed and analyzed for centuries. But what might the biblical author have been saying to his ancient audience? In order to rediscover the biblical flood, we must set aside our own cultural and interpretive assumptions and visit the distant world of the ancient Near East. Walton and Longman lead us on this enlightening journey toward a more responsible reading of a timeless biblical narrative.



The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites

by John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton | August 15, 2017 | \$24.99, 288 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5184-3

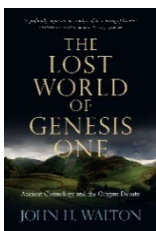
Perhaps no biblical episode is more troubling than the conquest of Canaan. But do the so-called holy war texts of the Old Testament portray a divinely inspired genocide? John Walton and J. Harvey Walton take us on an archaeological dig, reframing our questions and excavating the layers of translation and interpretation that cloud our perception of these difficult texts.



The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority

by John H. Walton and Brent Sandy | November 1, 2013 | \$32.99, 320 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4032-8

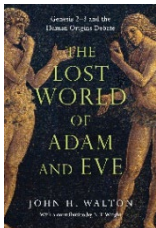
Walton and Sandy summarize what we know of orality and oral tradition as well as the composition and transmission of texts in the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world, and how this shapes our understanding of the Old and New Testaments. The authors then translate these insights into a helpful model for understanding the reliability of Scripture.



The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate

by John H. Walton | May 22, 2009 | \$22.99, 192 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3704-5

With an astute mix of cultural critique and biblical scholarship, John H. Walton presents and defends twenty propositions supporting a literary and theological understanding of Genesis 1 within the context of the ancient Near Eastern world and unpacks its implications for our modern scientific understanding of origins.



The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate

by John H. Walton | February 27, 2015 | \$22.99, 256 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-2461-8

What if reading Genesis 2–3 in its ancient Near Eastern context shows that the creation account makes no claims regarding Adam and Eve's material origins? John Walton's groundbreaking insights into this text create space for a faithful reading of Scripture along with full engagement with science, creating a new way forward in the human origins debate.



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