

2: Creation in Missiological Perspective

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Introduction

In Module Two we are beginning by looking briefly at Module One, and in this lesson we will cover two weeks of Module One. This is not a simple reproduction, but an attempt to update and go beyond it. However, the topic of creation in missiological perspective may puzzle you. I think Henry Morris's brief reading for today has a marvelous point to make: that people around the world who don't have a thousand years of Christian background really can't be evangelized in the same way that we go about it in the Western world. They need to be able to build on something that they can already see before the Scriptures get into their language.

He points out the fact that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies declare His handiwork. The key point as you go further in that verse is that there is no speech or language in which the creation's voice is not heard. This is called in the theological tradition a *general revelation*, as compared to a *special revelation*, which would be the term for Scripture or for some special act of God in the affairs of men. General revelation is one of the great bulwarks of communicating the gospel.

For example, the missionaries who went to China in the last century came right out of Yale and Harvard and Princeton, and were schooled in the very latest arenas of science. When they went to China, they sensed the same need to explain the things of God in terms of what God had made. So they produced textbooks in Chinese that were more up-to-date than the school textbooks in the United States (what they study in university always takes a few years to get into the grade schools; it's sort of a filtering-down process). But it is a fact that the missionaries' concern to explain the glory of God involved them in the development of science textbooks in China that were very advanced and outstanding. We look at these things not because we simply want to bolster our own faith, but because this is a primary method of reaching out to people around the world.

This lesson covers a lot of material. The first two weeks of the last module talked about four different mysteries: the mystery of the appearance of, or the nature of, of the universe; the mystery of the

appearance of, or the nature of, life itself; the further significant additional mystery of the appearance of humanity, of the human being. (This is not quite the same as the mold you find in yeast. The human being is just a little more complicated, to put it mildly, yet the same DNA molecule defines and controls both of them.)

Then fourthly, we discussed the mystery of the embarrassingly sudden appearance of the ancient civilizations. We just don't have any backgrounds for these civilizations, even though we have lengthy evidence of their foreground decline. This is just simply an unexplainable mystery. It is interesting that in all four cases you have this element not just of mystery but of increasing mystery: that is, the more we learn, the more mysterious the whole thing is. We are not really making headway in terms of understanding the primary reality, but we are vastly better off in terms of details.

It is like someone who goes into the study of magnetism, let's say, and learns everything there is to know about magnetism; but he still does not know what magnetism is. He knows how it acts, he knows where it shows up, he knows all the different situations in which magnetism is important, but he has no idea what the magnetism is. As a matter of fact, nobody has any idea what magnetism is. It is very hard, when you stop to think of it, to reason out how two pieces of metal by some unseen force would attract each other.

The same sort of thing, but far weaker, is gravitation. You might have two pieces of material that would attract each other magnetically and they also attract each other gravitationally. It is a very small force between materials; however if you get something as large as the planet earth, it becomes a significant force. If you don't believe it, jump out of a third-story window and the jolt will tell you the scope of that force.

The fact is, though, that we have recurrently in all four mysteries this question of sudden appearances, sudden changes. In Module One we had several words that we dredged up from different books that spoke of the difficulty of explaining these sudden changes. There was the phrase "bursts of speciation," and "the mysterious leaps" or "rapid branching." These all give a sense of legitimacy to

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otherwise unexplainable phenomena, of course. The one I like the best is "punctuated equilibrium." That makes the most mysterious changes seem perfectly understandable and legitimate. But these terms do not really explain anything. They describe, but do not explain.

One of the most remarkable statements that I have run into by a Harvard astronomer is the statement that there still is no satisfactory detailed mechanism for producing large enough, non-lethal variation of the DNA to produce a new species in a single jump. Now, "non-lethal" here means something that will not break down of its own weight, something that is healthy, viable, and better. The whole idea of evolution, of course, is that things are evolving into a *more perfect* and more sophisticated form. (Of course, there are mutations that are cripples,

people with three arms, for example, but they do not seem to be taking over the earth.)

This man, who speaks in evolutionary terms, comes to the following conclusion: “It remains an act of faith on the part of evolutionists that there is some way for it to have happened bit by bit.” There is no evidence; even what we seem to see we can describe but not explain. He says whether God designed the universe at the outset so that the appropriate mechanisms could arise in the course of time (which is itself a leap of faith, which many eminent scientists have questioned), or whether God gives an occasional timely input, is something that science by its very nature will probably never be able to fathom. One of our major problems is the fact that people find it hard to admit the existence of what in science they call anomalies (*nomos* is the word for law in Greek; an anomaly means something that doesn’t fit the rule or doesn’t fit the pattern). These anomalies are hard to acknowledge and assimilate, apart from some explanation that makes them no longer an anomaly.

The illustration often given is the fact that any school child could look at a globe, and see that South America and Africa look like they would fit together. I mean, I noticed this; everybody probably noticed this. The issue’s been raised thousands of times, probably for centuries. But there was nothing we knew about the earth that would allow for what we now call *plate tectonic movement*.

So the anomaly which was plain for everyone to see, was describable but wasn’t even mentionable because there was no theory for why it was. Finally, plate tectonics, that is to say, the actual movement of the land masses, became to be an accepted reality. Oh, then, of course, sure! In fact, somebody put the data into a computer, and figured out by computer that it had to fit! As I say, a fourth-grade kid could have told you that this looks like it used to fit together. You don’t need a computer. But you can’t acknowledge the situation, the anomaly, the jump, the unexplainable, unless there is some sort of a theory that would allow this to be reasonable. In other words, anomalies in themselves have problems.

But now let’s focus on this word “evolution” for a minute. It is used in different ways. In the last module we didn’t have any trouble acknowledging the legitimacy of the word in a phrase like “the evolution of the American automobile.” That is a common way of talking. You could speak of the evolution of Paris fashions over a period of time. I don’t think they really keep getting better, like the evolution of automobiles; they may actually get worse, but at least they change and they change suddenly. There does need to be some sort of a systematic out-moding of clothing that has not been worn out, or you are going to place the whole industry in danger, so it is very important for the Parisian fashion designers to keep doing what they’re doing. So you can describe that whole process over a period of time as an evolutionary process. That is an acceptable use of the word.

If anyone came along and said, “You know, you can trace a genetic connection in these automobiles. They all, for example, are built around an internal combustion engine; they all have pistons that go back and forth. (There have been a few mutations that died off, that didn’t have pistons, like the Mazda that had the rotary type of internal combustion engine.) But the durability of certain basic characteristics shows that it would be perfectly possible for one model to mutate into the next, *without anybody’s help*.” Now has anyone ever proposed that?

You can even imagine a chart on the wall, showing the evolution of the automobile from the Model T to the Model A, and Model B, and then on down. Then it would branch out into trucks and pick-ups, and vans, and sports cars, and so forth, into Jaguars and Ferraris and all kinds of marvelous things. And that is fine, that is evolution. But if you imply that there was *no external input*, you are dead! Nobody in the world would accept that. Yet when we come to the realities of life—the record of the rocks—it is called evolution. Of course, that is evolution! The question is not whether it can be described as evolutionary, but whether you can possibly allow for this to happen *without external input*.

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I personally believe (and the older I get, the more I believe) that God has a work force, an angelic work force constantly busy producing new models of all kinds of things. The basic entity is not the internal combustion engine, but the DNA molecule that is infinitely more sophisticated. (It is what every artist, every craftsman would want to work with, because by tinkering with that DNA molecule, you can produce anything from yeast mold to elephants to dinosaurs or to human beings. They all are built out of that same basic genetic code, which is absolutely astounding!) Imagine the joy, the excitement of this angelic force tinkering and linking and producing marvelous, beautiful, peaceful life.

But the more I think about it, the less I can believe that God (or let’s say, his angelic work force) is the source of these really destructive forms of life: dinosaurs with five-foot jaws that just tear other huge beasts to pieces. Is God taking great pleasure, does He watch videos with great glee as crocodiles tear the facial flesh off wildebeests, with their bulging eyes and spurting blood? Does God enjoy that kind of thing? I don’t think so. I think if human beings nowadays are able to examine certain diseased deviations in human life and trace this to defective DNA (and perhaps someday repair that DNA), I think the angelic and demonic work forces would be able to tamper with that DNA, too.

I don’t think we are any smarter than they are.

You could easily imagine that they have resources that we do not have and that this would help us to understand not just the evolution of higher life forms but the atrocious evidence and presence of drastic, destructive evil. I don't think it is the angelic work force that is developing new deadly viruses that pull down and destroy the life that they created earlier. I think we are dealing with demonic angelic forces.

In any case, we have these profound unexplainable mysteries. Let's not be too hard on the scientists if they can't explain these changes apart from external intervention, or input, angelic or otherwise. The fact is, these things are unexplainable, and we have to live with that, just as the scientists have to live with it. These realities are bursting out in almost every way.

The fifth mystery, of course, is the remainder of Module One, and we will be occupying ourselves with that for a long time in the future.

Review

1. What is the twentieth century equivalent of the Copernican revolution?

I don't think this is a prominent feature in your readings, but it may to some extent simply be a kind of reintegration of common knowledge. We have all heard of the Copernican Revolution, the transition from the concept of a flat earth to a global planet. That is quite a revolution in perspective and it was definitely resisted. In fact, there was for many years just outside of Chicago a city called Zion City. Here a religious group, a very fine group in many ways, all adhered to the concept of a flat earth. It was zealously upheld and all attempts to prove otherwise were defied by relatively scholarly writings by the leaders of that community, right into the twentieth century.

Of course, the parallel to the Copernican Revolution—there might be more than one parallel—is that in which the leading astronomer in the country, a Harvard professor, held out until the last minute against the possibility that the Andromeda nebula was actually a galaxy, not just a star. He had already made the adjustment from a heliocentric universe, where our own sun is the center of the universe, which of course is already an advance over our *planet* being the center of the universe. He had already made the adjustment to the idea that maybe our own galaxy was considerably larger, but the idea that there were other galaxies was unimaginable!

Now, of course, we talk about billions of other galaxies, we talk about galaxies and clusters of galaxies and the most recent developments are just utterly astounding. It would seem that clusters of clusters exist, but that they are on a

single plane, a convex plane that implies a massive sphere and that one whole section of the universe seems to be running off in a funny direction. In just the last 20 years (in fact, the last two years, when the Hubble Telescope was like turning on the windshield wipers on a foggy day and all of a sudden we could see more clearly), instead of discovering the answers, we discovered a massive avalanche of new questions. Now, as some optimists among the scientists say, we're at the verge of a new breakthrough in understanding. Let's hope so! There is nothing ungodly about a new breakthrough in the understanding of nature, but it certainly is obvious that we have a lot of Copernican Revolutions to digest in this century.

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Even going from solar system to galaxy was very difficult. For many people it was difficult to imagine that this massive swath of stars, and presumably of stellar systems, composing our galaxy was really only one entity. What further puzzles everyone to this moment is the fact that unlike the nature of our solar system, where you have different planets running around at different speeds (Pluto goes around not just once a year, but once every 240 years), the galaxy doesn't have anything going around anything! You might say that the whole galaxy moves like a single fixed object.

But there is incredible space between the visible items within that galaxy. It is so spacey that they say you could throw galaxies through each other and if it were not for gravitation they wouldn't even have any collisions of stars. You could do that multiple times without any danger at all. They are absolutely spaced out, almost just like a gaseous cloud. But nevertheless, everything moves as if it were imbedded in a massive invisible slab of mud.

Thus the idea has been postulated that there is invisible matter: there must be something holding all those solar systems in place. Nothing prevents the planets from going around, but something prevents the stars from going around at different velocities. The whole galaxy is moving like a frisbee. It's going around and around at so slow a pace that we are not even sure how long it would take to go around one revolution. Nevertheless, there is nothing moving within that massive slab. So the very idea of dark matter comes into the picture. Scientists have no difficulty postulating something that they cannot even fathom, so long as it is not a person!

This is really a problem because it becomes more and more inevitable day after day that evolution, though it can be described, cannot be explained *apart from external input*. And that external input could be anything, so long as it isn't a person, because that would be unscientific! Russian scientists don't blush at the

suggestion that man, life, even civilization came full blown from outer space, and that would seem to explain everything.

When you stop to think about it, that doesn't explain the origin of such things, it just explains their appearance. It's sweeping the problem under the rug by saying, Oh, we don't know how all this started here—it must have started someplace else. Well, it is still just as difficult to explain how it started or how it has evolved without external input. So we are dealing with evolution that can be described but which cannot be explained.

4. In what way do the first four “mysteries” testify to an increase in knowledge, and to an even more rapid increase in confusion?

This question is an attempt to give some continuity in our observations about all of these four mysteries. There are probably more than four mysteries of the type I'm describing because, in a sense, the jump from inorganic matter that composes the entire universe to the phenomenon we call life is an enormous leap—one of those unexplained leaps. It's very difficult for scientists to explain exactly how that could have happened, although they have implied from time to time that it could have happened accidentally.

Sir Fred Hoyle, the famous British astronomer, just says there is not the slightest possibility (he doesn't say God was necessary to produce life, he says there is not the slightest possibility) that inorganic materials fell together to generate a DNA molecule that has a highly coded double helix that includes two billion different atoms. And everything that consists of life—whether it is a twig on a tree, or yeast mold, or dinosaurs or elephants—this is all the output of an incredibly complex code, like a computer program. Now that this could have just fallen together is one of those leaps of faith.

But then when you go from that, let's say, to the so-called higher forms of life, again, you have a whole lot of leaps. Then when you go from just plain old man to civilization, again the Russians resort to explanations that these remarkable ancient civilizations with their incredible sophistication must have simply dropped in from another planet or from another solar system. That seems to give them satisfaction. That is just fine, but in all of these cases, in all of these mysterious situations, every new understanding, whether it is of the universe, or of life, or of man, or of civilization, brings up a host of new questions.

We dig up mummies on the coast of Chile and discover that they are 2000 years older than the mummies in Egypt. Supposedly that could not happen, in terms of our previous understanding. All this additional knowledge, that you would think

would make us smarter and more confident of our grasp of reality, actually undermines our confidence in our ability to explain. The famous statement is that the diameter of our knowledge increases at a certain pace, but the circumference of our ignorance increases three times as fast as the diameter. (Actually it isn't three times, it's 3.14159 or something like that—the value of Pi.)

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The fifth mystery is, of course, the unfolding plan of God. This has been there clearly in Scripture all this time, but for the most part has not been perceived by Bible expositors. This is the thing we are going to be tracking over the 4,000 years from Abraham to the present, as we indulge ourselves in the four modules of this curriculum. In any event, mystery is something we need to delight in and live with rather than rebel against or feel depressed about. It does, as the speech of the heavens in all languages, pave the way for a humility, an understanding and an awe and a worship on the part of those who are willing to accept the plain meaning of Scripture about the presence of God and His purposes