

§ 9. Excursus on Creation of Life and Biological Diversity

Lecture 23

Adam in the New Testament

The last several months we have been studying the primeval history of Genesis 1-11. But of course there's all the rest of the Scriptures to consider as well. Remarkably, however, for all his importance in Christian theology, Adam is scarcely mentioned in the remainder of the Old Testament outside the primeval history of Genesis 1-11. His name appears again in the Old Testament only in 1 Chronicles 1:1-24 at the head of a genealogy of Abraham which the author has simply constructed via scissors and paste from the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. In extra-canonical Jewish literature, by contrast, the narratives of Adam and Eve are often put to work for varying theological purposes. I'm speaking here of the Jewish pseudepigrapha and apocrypha. To give you an idea of the amount of literature that we're talking about here, I brought Charlesworth's two-volume edition of the Jewish pseudepigrapha and apocrypha including things like *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *Maccabees*, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, things of that sort. This is intertestamental Jewish literature that is not included in the Old Testament canon. In this pseudepigraphal and apocryphal literature you find Adam occurring as a theological figure. For example, we have Adam the paradigmatic moral man of the book of *Sirach* and from Josephus. We have Adam the model of faithful Torah observance of the law in the book of *Jubilees*. We have Adam the archetypal sinner in the book of *4 Ezra*, Adam the image of the divine Logos of Philo of Alexandria, and so on. It's noteworthy that despite the various theological uses to which Adam is put and the various theological interpretations of him, all of these Jewish texts concur in presenting Adam as a historical person, the first human being to be created.

When we come to the New Testament, we find the figure of Adam widely deployed most importantly by the apostle Paul. Let me read to you the principal texts from Paul concerning Adam.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 Paul writes:

Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we

have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

2 Corinthians 11:3:

I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

And then the most important passage, Romans 5:12-21:

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned— sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, 1 Timothy 2:12-14:

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

This is doubtless a very impressive array of texts concerning the figure of Adam, but they should not be treated indiscriminately, lest we be misled.

Many scholars have attempted to distinguish between what is called the *literary* Adam and the *historical* Adam. Unfortunately, this distinction is not always clearly drawn or consistently applied. The literary Adam is a character in a story, specifically the stories of Genesis 2-3. The historical Adam is the person who actually existed, the actual individual that the stories are allegedly about. This distinction between the literary Adam and the

historical Adam implies a further distinction between truth and truth-in-a-story. A statement S is true if and only if S states what is the case. A statement S is true-in-a-story if and only if it is found in or implied by that story. So if I say, for example, that Gilgamesh slew the Bull of Heaven, my statement, though true-in-the-*Epic of Gilgamesh*, is false. Truth-in-a-story does not, however, preclude truth. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* there are, or are implied, statements such as “Gilgamesh was an ancient Sumerian king,” which are both true-in-the-epic and true. So the relevant question then is whether the above New Testament passages that I've read are intended to assert truths or merely truths-in-a-story. Just to recap then. The literary Adam is a character in a story. The historical Adam is the real flesh-and-blood person that actually lived. Truth-in-a-story is a statement's being in the story or being implied by a statement in the story whereas truth simply states what is the case.

With those distinctions in mind, we must further distinguish between a New Testament author's using a text *illustratively* versus what I'll call *assertorically*. I know that's an ugly word, but I couldn't think of anything better to express what I'm getting at here. The illustrative use of a text and the assertoric use of a text. Using a text illustratively is using the text merely to provide an illustration, real or imagined, of the point that the author is trying to make. So the illustrative use of a text is using the text to provide an illustration which may be either real or imagined of the point the author's trying to make. Such an illustrative use of a text does not commit the user to the truth of the text itself but merely to truth-in-a-text. So, for example, Greek mythology which is so familiar to us in Western culture is frequently the source of illustrations for us. We speak, for example, of something's being a Trojan horse, or of someone's having an Achilles' heel, or of somebody's opening a Pandora's box, without thinking that we are thereby committing ourselves to the historical reality of these relevant mythical entities.

This illustrative use of a text occasions a further distinction between what a person citing a text *believes* and what that person *asserts*. Perhaps someone using the illustration of the Trojan horse believes that such an instrument actually existed and helped to turn the tide of the Trojan War; but right or wrong, his personal belief is irrelevant to the point that he's trying to assert or teach. Thus, a text is used assertorically, as I'm using the word, just in case the user means to teach the truth of what the text says and not merely truth-in-a-text. So an assertoric use of a statement is teaching the truth of the text not simply truth-in-the-text, and that is the case whether he believes the text to be true or whether he doesn't believe it to be true. That's quite distinct from what he is asserting.

The illustrative use of a story is using a story merely to illustrate a point, and as we all know from hearing preachers' sermons, often illustrations are made up. They're not about real things, but that's fine. They still serve to illustrate the point the preacher is making. By contrast, if you're using the text assertorically then you are asserting the truth of what

you're saying, and it doesn't matter whether you believe in the illustration you're using or not. If you're only using it illustratively then you're not asserting what the illustration says – it's simply serving to illustrate the point you want to make.

I draw these distinctions not to try to weasel out of commitments on the part of New Testament authors to the historical Adam or the historicity of Genesis stories. Rather these distinctions are important in our treatment of many New Testament passages which, if interpreted assertorically, would involve unwanted commitments to pseudepigraphal and mythological entities. This is a lot more important than just dealing with the historical Adam or the primeval history. As we'll see, these distinctions are vital lest we be committed to mythological and pseudepigraphal entities.

Let's turn to some fascinating New Testament texts to give examples of this point.

In the books of Jude and 2 Peter we find examples of the use of extra-biblical literary texts. Jude and 2 Peter appeal to these non-canonical literary texts, and in these books we find the wholesale importation of extra-biblical material. For example, in condemning the false teachers of his day, Jude contrasts them to the archangel Michael in his dispute with the devil over Moses' body. Jude writes in verses 9 and 10:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” But these men [the false teachers of Jude's day] revile whatever they do not understand, and by those things that they know by instinct as irrational animals do, they are destroyed.

The problem here is that no such incident as this is to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures. There's nothing about a dispute between Michael and the devil over the corpse of Moses. But according to the early church father Origen, such a story is to be found in the Jewish apocryphal book *The Assumption of Moses*. Origen writes,

in the book of Genesis, the serpent is described as having seduced Eve; regarding whom, in the work entitled *The Ascension of Moses* (a little treatise, of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle), the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of Adam and Eve's transgression.

That's from Origen's work *On First Principles* (3.2.1). Unfortunately for us, the extant version of this treatise *The Assumption of Moses* is known only from a single, very late, incomplete manuscript which does not include the story that is mentioned by Jude and Origen. But it seems to have been a part of Jewish folklore which was also known to the author of 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 2:10-11 he says,

Bold and wilful, they are not afraid to revile the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a reviling judgment upon them before the Lord.

So we have here in Jude and 2 Peter apparent references to the literary Moses of the book *The Assumption of Moses*, but not to the literary Moses of Genesis. This is from this apocryphal Jewish work.

Again, another example, after providing various examples to illustrate the danger of false teachers, Jude then goes on to actually quote from *1 Enoch* as though it were authentic. In Jude verses 14 and 15, speaking of the false teachers, Jude declares,

It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

This is a citation from the Greek text of *1 Enoch* 1:9 which reads,

Behold, he will arrive with ten million of the holy ones in order to execute judgment upon all. He will destroy the wicked ones and censure all flesh on account of everything that they have done, that which the sinners and wicked ones committed against him.

Jude cites the author of *1 Enoch*, which is a pseudepigraphal book dated between around 400 to 200 BC, as though he were identical to the Enoch of the antediluvian primeval history, the seventh generation after Adam.

It seems to me that this text is the *reductio ad absurdum* of overly easy arguments for Old Testament historicity on the basis of New Testament authority. By failing to distinguish between the illustrative use of a text and the assertoric use of a text, those who offer such arguments are driven into a hopeless position. This is well illustrated by the writer Guy Waters. Waters writes as follows,

Jude here identifies ‘Enoch’ as descended from Adam, in the seventh generation from Adam. He treats Enoch as a historical personage, who utters the prophecies documented in verses 14-15. The fact that Enoch is identified as ‘the seventh from Adam’ not only confirms Enoch’s historicity but also assumes Adam’s historicity.

. . . Some have argued that Jude quotes from a book that his opponents regarded as authoritative, but that Jude did not. Others more plausibly have suggested that Jude regarded these words as a historically accurate, authentic utterance of the

prophet Enoch, an utterance that, in the providence of God, was preserved in 1 Enoch.¹

There are two claims that are being made here in Waters' supposedly "more plausible" suggestion. First is that Jude personally believed that the words cited from *1 Enoch* were a historically accurate, authentic utterance of the antediluvian Enoch, and second, that in fact Enoch's words were, in God's providence, preserved in *1 Enoch*. The first of those claims is irrelevant and the second is desperate. As we've seen, an author using a text illustratively may or may not believe in the factuality of the illustration, and the usefulness of the illustration is independent of the author's personal belief. So if Jude is using *1 Enoch* illustratively, as seems plausible, then his personal beliefs about Enoch's historicity are just irrelevant. Water's further suggestion that an oral tradition emanating from the antediluvian Enoch has been preserved over thousands of years to reach the ears of the author of the pseudepigraphal *1 Enoch* can hardly be said to be plausible. If Jude is using the examples illustratively rather than assertorically, then overly easy historicity proofs of Old Testament narratives must fail. That an assertoric interpretation of Jude 14 forces us to conclude that in *1 Enoch* 1:9 we hear the authentic voice of the antediluvian Enoch I think should give any New Testament theologian serious pause.

Another fascinating example comes from 2 Timothy 3:8. Warning against religious hypocrites, Paul says "As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith." Again, these personages Jannes and Jambres do not appear in the Old Testament; but they are widely known in Jewish folklore as the unnamed magicians in Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses in Exodus 7:11, 22 doing counterfeit miracles. The New Testament reference here in [2 Timothy] most closely resembles the account given in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, a later Jewish work. The *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* says, "Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and Yanis and Yambris, the sorcerers who were in Egypt, also did the same with the spells of their divinations." That's from the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. Origen, the same church father mentioned before, refers to an apocryphal Greek text called *The Book of Jannes and Jambres*,² and Ethiopic and Greek fragments of this work do exist.³ The traditions behind this work may have been known in the Essene community at

¹ Guy Prentiss Waters, "Theistic Evolution Is Incompatible with the Teachings of the New Testament," in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem, with a Foreword by Steve Fuller (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2017), p. 891.

² *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 27.8*

³ See *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians*, ed. and trans. with an Introduction and Commentary by Albert Pietersma (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); for discussion of this and other traditions concerning Jannes and Jambres see Koji Osawa, "Jannes and Jambres: The Role and Meaning of their Traditions in Judaism," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 37 (2011-12): 55-73.

See Erho, Ted; Krueger, Frederic; Hoffmann, Matthias (2016). "Neues von Pharaos Zauberern". *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel*. 2: 70–72. Retrieved 29 January 2018

Qumran because they are mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the so-called *Damascus Document* among the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the following, “Moses and Aaron still continued in their charge . . . even though Belial [that is, Satan] in his cunning had set up Jannes and his brother in opposition to them” (5.17-19). A bewildering variety of contradictory traditions concerning Jannes and Jambres grew up within Judaism. In the traditions that employ the pair’s Hebrew names, which are presumably more primitive, there is no magician’s contest with Moses. Rather, they simply quarrel with Moses and then they accompany Pharaoh’s army in pursuit of the Israelites. They then fly about magically at the Red Sea and are finally killed by either God or Moses. By contrast, in the traditions featuring their Greek names, which are re-transcribed into Hebrew, we find that the pair serve at Pharaoh’s court, they lose to Moses in a magician’s contest, as a result they convert to Judaism, and then they go into the wilderness with the Israelites!⁴ The New Testament scholar Koji Osawa says with regard to these figures,

They came to be seen as the exemplars of evil persons in Judaism, so that their names came to be used in a variety of scenes without restriction by time or place. That is to say, those who recorded the Judaic traditions included Jannes and Jambres in stories from whatever time to portray someone as an evil person in Judaism by comparing that someone with Jannes and Jambres and thus to emphasize the sinfulness of those who oppose God.⁵

We should therefore be very rash, I think, to assume that in appealing to these well-known figures to illustrate corrupt religion Paul means to assert the historicity of these two literary figures (whatever his personal belief might have been).

Finally, one last example is that we have Paul’s allusion in 1 Corinthians 10:4 to the Rock which accompanied the ancient Israelites through their wilderness wanderings. Paul writes, “All drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ.” Commentators commonly see here a reference to a Jewish legend based upon Numbers 21:16-18 concerning a miraculous well which was shaped like a rock which continually accompanied Israel and supplied her with fresh water in the desert. This legend, which then flourished in later rabbinic Judaism, is documented as early as the treatise in the first century called *Biblical Antiquities* by pseudo-Philo. *Biblical Antiquities* state,

But as for his own people, he led them forth into the wilderness: forty years did he rain bread from heaven for them, and he brought them quails from the sea, and a well of water following them brought he forth for them. . . . the water of Mara was made sweet and followed them in the desert forty years (10.7; 11.15).

⁴ Osawa, “Jannes and Jambres,” pp. 71-72.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

So the tradition in some form doubtless goes back to the pre-Christian era, and Paul picks up this extra-canonical tradition in order to identify the Rock as Christ, who sustained Israel throughout its sojourn in the wilderness.

On the basis of these examples, I think we can see how naive it is to argue that just because some New Testament author refers to a literary figure, whether found in the Old Testament or outside of it, that therefore that figure is asserted to be a historical person, much less really is a historical person. We need to pay close attention to the context in order to determine whether the New Testament author not merely believes in the historicity of the person referred to but is asserting his historicity, rather than just using the figure illustratively. Again, the use of a figure illustratively does not imply that the figure is unhistorical; it just short-circuits overly easy proofs of historicity.

START DISCUSSION

Student: Would you say then that it would be wise in cases of the mention of Enoch in Jude and Jannes and Jambres to remain, for lack of a better word, agnostic about those details in trying to just decide whether they're just illustrative or historical, in the absence of other data. I think this would be more difficult with Adam in the Adam passages, but with these smaller mentions specifically.

Dr. Craig: I would say that you need to be agnostic about it simply from looking at it in Jude. But when you consider the source of Jude's quotation (namely, *1 Enoch*), the idea that that is an authentic historical utterance of the Enoch before the Flood that somehow got handed down and preserved is preposterous. So, on that basis, I would say not just agnosticism but we should say that this is not a reference to the historical person.

Student: What I also meant is considering the source as well, but if we understand the Bible to be divinely inspired then perhaps – perhaps – just that one detail hints at something that was historically true. And even though we can't confirm that per se, those details don't seem to contradict any other details we have about Enoch. The same with the detail about the archangels.

Dr. Craig: I don't think the New Testament author would cite something that would be in contradiction to the Old Testament. But just as I can cite fiction or other sorts of stories to illustrate a point, I think the New Testament authors, under divine inspiration, can do the same thing. They can cite these illustrations from Jewish folklore and myth without thereby committing themselves to the historicity of these things.

END DISCUSSION⁶

⁶ ?Total Running Time: 35:14 (Copyright © 2019 William Lane Craig)