

Fallacies in Timothy Keller's Rejection of Genesis 1 and 2

Give me 10 minutes, and I will show you Keller's Biblical fallacies of evolution and how to avoid them.

"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions." (1)

Error turns into accepted truth as it gains popularity. The popularity of evolution blinds the eyes of multitudes to its Biblical errors, especially when endorsed by popular leaders like Timothy Keller.

Fallacies Of Literary Style Of Genesis 1

"...Genesis 1 does not teach that God made the world in six twenty-four-hour days." (2) Timothy Keller based this falsehood upon a series of wrong conclusions:

- The literary format (poetry, story, non-fiction, etc.) of a text determines the intent of the author (3). Poetry does not describe literal events.
- Repetition of words and phrases in Genesis 1 does not fit a non-fiction style. "Obviously, this is not the way someone writes in response to a simple request to tell what happened." (4)
- Genesis 1 reads like poetry, not a non-fiction account of what actually happened. (5).

Keller's inaccuracies caused him to conclude that Genesis fails to describe literal events, regardless of its literary format.

Contradictions Of Keller's Fallacies Of Literary Style Of Genesis 1

Contrary to Keller, Genesis 1 describes God's acts of creation in six twenty-four days. The literary style of a writing does not determine the reality or non-reality of the events described in it. A written passage includes not only its format but also the message that it delivers. The reader must examine the presentation of the text and the message that it delivers.

Mere repetition of words and/or phrases does not qualify as evidence of poetry as Keller claims. Repetition emphasizes the point(s) made by the writer to implant the message into the minds of the audience.

Further, the phrase "...evening and morning..." for each day in Genesis 1 identified them as twenty-four-hour days. The Bible never uses the words "evening" or "morning" to represent long periods of time. They always identify parts of a twenty-four-hour day. Taken together, they describe a full day of twenty-four hours. (6) Exodus 20.8-11, 31.12-17, and Numbers 9.15-16 further confirm the description in Genesis 1 as six twenty-four-hour days.

The Holy Spirit used a wide variety of formats to convey His message. In fact, the Bible frequently uses poetry to describe literal events.

- Judges 5.20-21: Keller used it to "prove" the non-literal meaning of poetry. But the text described a massive rainstorm that flooded the river region where Barak's enemies dwelled. It enabled Barak to rout the enemy and gain victory.
- The Song of Miriam in Exodus 15.21, the Song of Moses in Exodus 15.1-18, numerous Psalms, and countless other Biblical examples reveal diverse writing styles that describe actual events.

Therefore, even if one proves Genesis 1 as a poem, which Keller failed to prove, it does not infallibly relegate the events described in Genesis 1 to non-literal occurrences as Keller claims. Contrary to Keller's false claims, the text of Genesis 1 describes God's acts of creation in six twenty-four days.

Fallacies Of Genesis 2

According to Timothy Keller, Genesis 2 supplants Genesis 1 as the accurate description of creation. (7)

Keller based this error upon the following misconceptions:

- Genesis 1 does not follow “natural” scientific order since creation of vegetation occurred before the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. (8)
- Genesis 1 and 2 cannot fit together and describe different parts of the same creation. (9)
- Genesis 2.4-6 describes the creation of all vegetation that supplants the creation of vegetation described in Genesis 1.11-13 making that described in Genesis 1.11-13 void.

Contradiction Of Keller’s Fallacies Of Genesis 2

Genesis 2 complements Genesis 1, including the creation of light described in Genesis 1.14-19.

Genesis 1.11-13 describes the creation of three kinds of vegetation on the earth: grass, plants with seeds, and fruit bearing trees. Genesis 2.5 records bushes and plants of the field.

These verses also contrast two different kinds of land:

- “earth” in Genesis 1.11-13, the whole earth; and
- “fields” in Genesis 2.5, a different word from the word for “earth” in Genesis 1.11-13 which describes the distinctive kinds of earth, i.e. tillable land as part of the earth that requires cultivation by mankind. (10)

Therefore, Genesis 2.5 listed that part of vegetation that needed gardening by humans whereas the flora identified in Genesis 1.11-13 did not. The texts do not contradict but harmonize. They describe the conditions on the earth before the creation of mankind (11), God's planting the Garden in Eden, and the placement of mankind in the Garden. Further, Genesis 2.6 describes how God watered the earth before He sent rain.

Many attempt to refute the creation’s record in Genesis 1 with the “natural” order argument. Yet, the Bible records numerous events when God disrupted the “natural” order for his purposes, e.g., three days’ darkness in Egypt (12), stopping the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River (13), stopping the sun during Joshua’s defeat of the Amorites (14), and the incarnation of Christ (15) to name only a few.

In fact, the New Jerusalem will have neither sun, moon, nor stars, but will have fruit bearing trees due to eternal light from the glory of God and of the Lamb. (16) Obviously, the light that God created in Genesis 1.3 provided the requirements necessary for the vegetation He created in Genesis 1.11-13.

Conclusion

Sadly, Keller misleads many with his errors because he relies upon false scientific theories as his primary basic belief. He then alters the Bible to conform to them. The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write Genesis 1 and 2 as He did, including creation mysteries, to call us to faith in God and His word. (17)

We must reject the siren call of popular culture, even “approved” leaders and their fallacies. Instead, we need to trust the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of God, even if it seems mysterious to us.

References

1. G. K. Chesterton
2. Timothy Keller. “Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople.” PDF p. 5 ¶ 2. Available at this link: http://biologos.org/uploads/projects/Keller_white_paper.pdf.
3. Keller, Ibid., PDF p. 3 ¶ 5.
4. Keller, Ibid., PDF p. 4 ¶ 2.
5. Keller, Ibid., PDF p. 4 ¶ 1-3.
6. H. C. Leupold. *Exposition of Genesis*. DeWard Publishing Co., Ltd., Chillicothe, OH 45601. 2010. p. 39-41.
7. Keller, Ibid., PDF p. 4 ¶ 4.
8. Keller, Ibid., PDF p. 4 ¶ 4.

9. Keller, *Ibid.*, PDF p. 5 ¶ 1.
10. *WORDsearch Bible Software*, v. 10.0.5. “Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.” Genesis 1.11 and Genesis 2.5.
11. *WORDsearch*, *Ibid.*
12. Exodus 10.21-29
13. Exodus 14; Joshua 3
14. Joshua 10.12-13
15. Luke 1.26-38
16. Revelation 21.23-25; 22.1-5
17. Hebrews 11.3