

Examining the Cosmos

Session 9 *Origin of Humanity*

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A Fashionable Find

By Fuz Rana

Diamonds are a girl's best friend. What about necklace beads made from seashells? A study conducted by anthropologists indicates that seashell beads were the rage near the time modern humans first appeared.¹ The timing of this fashion-conscious behavior provides support for the biblical account of humanity's origin.

Personal ornaments are found in all human cultures. Adorning **the body with decorative objects reflects advanced cognitive ability. Designing, assembling,** and wearing body ornaments is not a function of survival. Rather, jewelry denotes the capacity and propensity for artistic expression. Body ornaments in the archeological record also serve as markers for symbolic language. Personal decorations communicate group membership, social identity, and gender.

Anthropologists traditionally believed that body ornaments were not widely used until about 20,000 years ago—some time after the appearance of modern humans. Recently, however, a team of anthropologists from the University of Arizona, Yale University, and Ankara University in Turkey discovered widespread ornament use at 39,000 to 43,000 years ago in the Middle East and adjacent geographical areas. This finding fits within both biblical and scientific time frames for the appearance of Adam and Eve.²

The earliest humans apparently strung together marine shells to make necklaces. These early jewelers seem to have chosen shells on the basis of aesthetics. Instead of using mollusk shells left over from meals, they chose shells of unusual appearance, exceptionally white or brightly colored, with intricate patterns, shells from creatures with questionable food value. Ornamental shells were typically unfragmented, with a carefully punched hole, usually near the lip of the shell. The earliest humans appear to have been absorbed with making jewelry. Ornamental shells far outnumber shells used for food in the earliest geological layers investigated.

This discovery indicates that artistic expression and the use of symbolic language belong inherently and uniquely to humanity. Bipedal primates preceding modern humans lacked such capacities.³ At best, bipedal primates used extremely crude tools that remained static in sophistication for hundreds of thousands of years. Forty thousand years ago, tool kit complexity dramatically increased and artistic expression first appeared. The dual appearance of culture and humans meets the biblical creation model

expectation that human beings were recently created in the image of God as a result of God's direct activity.

References:

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