



Study 4:

# The Age Question

Biblical Creation: Part 1

Image Source:

•<http://www.nerys.com/stuff/earth.jpg>

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# So Which God?

- It's time to move from arguments for the existence of some sort of supernatural being, to arguments for why that God is the One described in the Christian Bible.
- We'll start by looking at what the Bible says about Creation and how the Genesis account holds up compared to the natural evidence.
- Then we'll examine the history of the Bible as well as the evidence that backs up what it says.



# Creation: Young or Old?

- Does the Bible clearly say the earth is less than 10,000 years old?
- Although this is generally considered the traditional interpretation, many Christian scholars think a less precise translation is equally valid.
- There are basically three Christian theories of Creation:
  - Theistic evolution
  - Young-earth creationism
  - Old-earth (progressive) creationism

# Theistic Evolution

- Evolutionary explanation for life (including how it developed and how long it took) is correct.
- God is the first cause of the universe and used macroevolution to develop life.
- Adam and Eve had biological parents, though it was through Adam that the human race fell.
- The Genesis creation account is symbolic like Christ's parables and much of Revelation.

Source:

• <http://www.theistic-evolution.com/theisticevolution.html> © 2007 Brian Frantz

# Young-Earth Creationism

- “Day” in Genesis can only be interpreted as a 24-hour period.
- Life (and possibly the universe) has existed for less than 10,000 years.
- Rejects conclusions of modern science as too biased to be believed.
- God created the earth with the appearance of age.
- Gap theory: variation that proposes that there is a gap of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 (to explain evidence that universe is very old).

Source:

• [http://www.kjvbible.org/gap\\_theory.html](http://www.kjvbible.org/gap_theory.html)

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# Old-Earth (Progressive) Creationism

- Like theistic evolution, accepts general consensus understanding of the ages of life and universe.
- Unlike theistic evolution, holds that each new life form was a special creation (possibly through recoded DNA) of God.
- Although life has existed for billions of years, the human race did indeed begin with Adam roughly 6000 years ago.
- Genesis should be read literally, although “day” is interpreted less specifically than in young earth creationism.

Source:

• <http://www.godandscience.org/youngearth/progressive.html>

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# Which is Correct?

- Which creation belief is most accurate is something we will probably never know.
- All three are compatible with faith in Christ, and disagreement over this topic should not be grounds for doubting a brother's faith.
- However, if we believe Creation to be a valid way to learn about the Creator, I think wrestling with this question is worthwhile.
- In this study, we'll focus on Progressive Creationism not because it's definitely correct (or necessarily held by the LCMS), but because I find it interesting and rather convincing in light of the natural evidence, and you may as well.



# Is Old-Earth Creationism a Compromise?

- Since it falls between the other two Christian beliefs, some may argue it's just a weak compromise.
  - YEC argument: it takes liberties with Scripture in order to fit better with scientific theories.
    - Response: Perhaps, but a progressive creationist doesn't reject any portion of scripture on scientific grounds. They just interpret it differently on these grounds.
  - Evolutionist argument: it rejects certain natural theories in order to be compatible with a literal reading of Genesis.
    - Response: Progressive creationism only rejects those natural theories which are unproven and clearly based on a naturalistic assumption that is incompatible with God.
- It could be argued that instead of watering down science or the Bible, Progressive Creationism, instead reconciles the seemingly contradictory elements while keeping both pure.
  - According to G.K. Chesterton, this is a quality of Christianity itself.



# Old Earth: Really a Scientific Fact?

- We've already seen a number of evidences that show the earth and universe to be very old (fact that we can see other galaxies, for example).
  - The universe may have been created with the appearance of age, but this is a strictly theological belief and has no basis in science.
  - Thus, science cannot be used to argue for or against it.
  - It is possible that God did it this way, but then we must write off all natural evidence from “long ago” as essentially meaningless.
  - I personally believe that these evidences are there for a reason and not meant to be a stumbling block to our faith, thus it is not wrong to take them seriously.
- There are plenty of other evidences for an old earth as well.
  - Radiometric dating
  - Geological processes (mountain building, glacial carving, canyons/caves, etc.)
  - Ordering of fossil record
  - Etc.

# Overview of Radiometric Dating

- Often dismissed by YECs as circular: scientists use assumed dates for rocks to date fossils, and in turn use those fossils to date the rocks they're in.
  - This is unfair. Yes, there are some difficulties with absolutely dating rocks, but radiometric dating is not based on arbitrary assumptions.
- Dr. Roger C. Wiens, a Christian scientist at Los Alamos, does a good job of explaining this in “Radiometric Dating: A Christian Perspective.”
  - Based upon known decay rates of elements found in igneous rocks.
  - Measure amount daughter material to calculate age of rock.
  - Accurate measurements require that we know how much daughter material was there originally.
    - This can be found using other dating methods, or through mathematical analysis of the ratios of these elements or signs of past disturbances.
  - Where radiometric dating does yield imprecise results, it's usually of a relatively small span – nothing like the many orders of magnitude that would change a billion-year reading to something less than 10,000 years.

Source:

•<http://www.asa3.org/aSA/resources/Wiens.html>

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# Genesis 1: *Yowm*

- If the conclusions of most scientists are correct, what does that do to our understanding of Genesis 1?
- The vast majority of English translations of the Bible translate the Hebrew word “*yowm*,” which appears in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament, as “day.”
- In English, “day” usually refers to a 24-hour period of time, so it’s not surprising that this interpretation has such a traditional basis in the Church.
  - And without a modern understanding of science, there wasn’t much reason to think it meant anything different.
  - Theologically, the exact meaning isn’t really relevant: the point of Genesis 1 is that God creative our universe, not precisely how it happened.
  - But given what we know today, does that shed a different light on the real meaning of Genesis?

Source:

•<http://www.asa3.org/aSA/resources/Wiens.html>

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# *Yowm*: Possible Meanings

- According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and the Theological Word Book of the Old Testament, *yowm* is translated as all of the following (and more) in the Old Testament:
  - 24-hour day
  - Days
  - Year
  - Season
  - Period of time
  - Age
- Thus, *yowm* does not necessarily mean "day."
  - Since the textual context of Genesis 1 Doesn't specify a certain meaning, it is not surprising that tradition would have determined how this was translated.
  - Consider:
    - Genesis 1:12
    - Genesis 2:4
    - Hebrews 4
    - 2 Peter 3:8
- Jesus often revealed spiritual messages in parables that His audience would more easily understand. Couldn't Genesis 1 be similar?
- Instead of giving all the specific details of how it happened, wouldn't it make sense that God would reveal it in a simplified form that the ancients would more easily grasp?

Source:

• <http://bible1.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/Hebrew/heb.cgi?number=03117&version=nas#Legend>



# Does an Old Earth Diminish God's Power?

- 2 Peter 3:8
  - With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.
- For an eternal being, time has no meaning. Thus a billions-of-years creation is no less miraculous than a 6-day one.
- Imagine the old-earth explanation “sped up” – this is similar to a timeless view of creation.