

“Science and Biblical Creation: Interpreting Scripture”

Session 2 in the Christianity and Science Series

Series Webpage: www.richknopp.com/lcc-science/

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www.RoomForDoubt.com

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Introduction

- A. The primacy of biblical creation in the O.T. (e.g., Gen. 1-2, Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 40:25-26; 45:12; Jer. 51:15-16).
- B. The prominence of God’s Son in biblical creation (e.g. John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2; 11:3).
- C. One obvious challenge.
 1. Dominant scientific paradigms.
 - a. The universe is ~13.8 billion years old and the earth is ~4.5 billion years old.
 - b. Life originated by natural processes and evolved through natural selection (Darwin).
 2. The Bible claims that God created it all in six days (Hebrew *yom* = day).
- D. Session objectives.
 1. Describe the uniqueness of *biblical* creation in the ancient world.
 2. Survey various interpretations of biblical creation by Christians.
 3. Reinforce the authority and relevance of Scripture.

I. The Uniqueness of Biblical Creation

- A. Other ancient near-east creation accounts.
 1. Egyptian: After defeating the god of the underworld, the sun-god, Ra, creates man from his tears.
 2. *Atrahasis Epic* (Babylonian): Humans created when Nintu mixes clay with the blood of another god. In another account, humans were created from blood and clay on which the gods spit.
 3. *Enuma Elish*: Marduk splits Tiamat in half to create heavens and earth, and humans were created to do the daily tasks of the gods.
- B. Contrasts to Genesis.

Other Creation Accounts	Genesis
• Multiple gods in a hierarchy	• ONE God
• Struggle & deceit among gods	• No struggle or deceit
• Promotes a local god (or place)	• Universal God over everyone and everything
• Nature & purpose of humanity: To take care of menial tasks for the gods.	• Humanity: Image of God (1:27); blessed and encouraged to multiply (1:28) given dominion over creation (1:29; 2:19-20); given ample provisions (1:29-30) and pleasure (2:9; 3:6); originally pure (2:25).

1. The Bible gives a different picture of DEITY.
2. The Bible gives a different picture of HUMANITY.
3. Poem: “God I Am”
- C. Ancient creation accounts emphasize the WHO and the WHY.
- D. Nagging questions.
 1. HOW?
 2. How LONG?

- E. Important points of biblical interpretation.
1. What did the spoken or written word mean to the _____ **ORIGINAL** _____ audience?
 2. The Bible was written _____ **FOR** _____ us but not _____ **TO** _____ us (1 Cor. 10:6-12 "... Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction" [v. 11]).

II. HOW Did Creation Occur?

- A. "And God **said** ..." (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26).
1. "The universe was created by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3 ESV).
 2. "He commanded and they were created" (Ps. 148:5).
- B. Creation **ex nihilo** (from _____ **NOTHING** _____).
1. "Create" (Hebrew *bara*): Applied only to God (e.g., Gen. 1:1,21,27; 2:4; 5:1-2) with a sense of creation from nothing. (Cf. John 1:3; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11)
 2. "Made" (Hebrew *asah*): Applied both to God (e.g., Gen. 1:7,16,25,26;) and to humans, with the sense of using already-existing material for a purpose (Gen. 3:21; Gen. 6:14-16; 13:4).
 3. But these words also overlap and are sometimes used interchangeably.
 - a. God *created* (Gen. 1:27) and *made* man (Gen. 1:26).
 - b. God rested from all his work which he *created* and *made* (Gen. 2:4).
 - c. "When God *created* man, he *made* him in the likeness of God. Male and female he *created* them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were *created*" (Gen. 5:1b-2).
- C. "**Let there be ...**": light (Gen. 1:3), an expanse (1:6), lights (sun & moon) (1:14-15).
- D. "**Let the ...**":
 1. Waters be gathered and dry land appear (1:9).
 2. Earth sprout vegetation (1:11).
 3. Waters teem with living creatures (1:20).
 4. Earth bring forth living creatures (1:24).
- E. "**According to its kind**"
 1. Vegetation, plants, fruit trees (Gen. 1:11-12).
 2. Sea creatures, every moving creature, winged birds (Gen. 1:21).
 3. Earth creatures, livestock, creeping things, beasts of the earth (Gen. 1:24-25).
- F. Big **take-aways**:
 1. God is the ultimate _____ **ORIGIN** _____ of the physical universe and of life.
 2. There is _____ **LATITUDE** _____ on what God does and what God "lets" nature do.
 3. There are _____ **LIMITS** _____ on what nature can do.

III. HOW LONG Did Creation Take? (O what a difference a "day" makes!)

- A. **Young Earth Creationism** (e.g., Bishop James Ussher; Ken Ham at <https://answersingenesis.org>; Kent and Eric Hovind; Creation Research Society; Institute for Creation Research).
1. The "days" (*yom*) of creation are consecutive, 24-hour solar days (144 total hours).
 2. The physical universe is less than 10,000 years old.
 3. The Genesis flood (Gen. 6) was *global*.
- B. **Gap Theory** (e.g., Scofield Reference Bible of 1909 and 1917).
1. A large time gap exists between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2.
 2. "The earth *became* [rather than "was"] formless [*tohu*] and void [*bohu*]" (Gen. 1:2).
 3. A prior creation (perhaps including fallen angels) was destroyed; and God started over.
- C. **Progressive Creationism** (e.g., Hugh Ross at www.reasons.org).
1. Day (*yom*) means indefinite periods of time, and God creates during distinct periods.
 2. Accepts the cosmological consensus about the age of the universe (13.8 byo) and the earth (4.5 byo).

3. Accepts the Bible as “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 2:16-17), authoritative, and trustworthy.
 4. God’s revelation in Scripture and in nature is ultimately consistent.
- D. **Analogical Day View** (e.g., C. John Collins in *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?*)
1. The “days” of creation are an *analogy* to the familiar workweek (Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 104:23).
 2. “There was evening and morning” highlight a *pause* in God’s creation activity.
- E. **Literary Framework View** (e.g., John Lennox in *Seven Days that Divide the World*).
1. The creation days are NOT sequential or chronological (1-6).
 2. Days 1/4, 2/5, and 3/6 are correlated in a literary way.
 3. On days 1-3, God creates a “container” or the “form.” (“formless” in Gen. 1:2)
 4. On days 4-6, God creates things that go *in* the container. (“void” in Gen. 1:2)

Genesis 1:3-31 (cf. Gen. 1:2 “formless and void”)

THE FORM	FILLED
Day 1: Light created (day); separated from darkness (night). [3-]	Day 4: Two great lights (sun and moon) and stars—signs for days and years. [14-]
Day 2: A “vault” or “expanse” (heaven/sky) in the midst of the waters; waters separated. [6-]	Day 5: Living creatures in waters; birds; sea creatures; every living creature ... with which the waters swarmed. [20-]
Day 3: Dry land appears (and seas); “let the land produce vegetation”; plants; trees. [9-]	Day 6: Living creatures on the ground; man “in our image” (male and female). [24-]

- F. Meanings for “day” (*yom*) stressed by **“old earth” creationists**.
1. *Yom* refers to the “light” called “day” as opposed to night (Gen. 1:5, 14, 16, 18).
 2. *Yom* refers to the entire creation period (Gen. 2:4).
 3. *Yom* refers to an indefinite period of time: “In the day (*yom*) you eat, you will die” (Gen 2:7); “day” of reckoning” (Isa. 2:12); “in the day of Massah ... when your fathers tested Me” (Ps. 95:8-9).
 4. *Yom* as the seventh day of God’s rest does not seem to be a 24-hour day (Gen. 2:2-3).
 5. A “day” is as a thousand years with the Lord (2 Peter 3:8; Ps. 90:4).

IV. Reflections and Applications on Biblical Creation

- A. Many devoted Christians who accept the Bible’s AUTHORITY have different interpretations on creation.
- B. The WHO and the WHY are clear in Scripture.
- C. What’s not so clear are the HOW and the HOW LONG.
- D. Don’t be DOGMATIC about only ONE interpretation.
- E. The biblical descriptions of creation are always RELEVANT.
- F. TRUST the sufficiency of Scripture to accomplish God’s purpose (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

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