

1) some preliminary considerations. (289)

- This is an issue over which Bible-believing Christians differ.
 - There is a danger of spending too much time arguing over the age of the earth and neglect to focus on the much more important and much clearer aspects of the overall teaching of the Bible on creation.
 - 2 Options: 1) “Old earth” (consensus with modern science dating the earth at 4,500,000,000 years old) and 2) “Young earth” dating the earth at 10,000 to 20,000 years.
- i) There are gaps in the genealogies of the Bible (e.g., Matthew 1:8-9 omits three generations of the same genealogy listed in 1 Chronicles 3:10-12). (290)
 - ii) The age of the human race: man existed by 10,000 B.C., as cave drawings indicate, but with variation in dating methods and the uncertainty of what man-like creatures were, before 10,000 it is difficult to say. (291)
 - iii) Did animals die before the Fall? (292)
 - (a) For the young earth position, this question is not important.
 - (b) For the old earth advocates, this could explain ancient fossils on earth.
 - (i) Plants were already subject to death (Adam and Eve would eat them).
 - (ii) The curse of death applied only to man. (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
 - (iii) We cannot know whether God created animals subject to death, but it remains a real possibility.
 - iv) What about dinosaurs? (293)
 - (a) Young earth: dinosaurs and humans lived on earth together.
 - (b) Old earth: some would say dinosaurs became extinct before the end of Day 6 of creation and others that they were alive with Adam and Eve and named in Genesis 2:19-20.
 - v) Are the six days of creation twenty-four-hour days? (293)

Young Earth supporters would favor twenty-four hour days.
Old Earth supporters would allow for long periods of time, millions of years, during which God created the earth.

 - (i) In favor of long periods, the Hebrew word *yom*, “day” is sometimes used to refer not to a twenty-four hour literal day but to a longer period of time. (Gen. 2:4; Pro 25:13; Eccl. 7:14; Exod. 20:12)
 - (ii) Day 6 includes so many events that it must have been longer than twenty four hours (i.e., creation of animals and man, blessing of Adam and Eve, commands regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, bringing the animals to be named, finding no helper fit for Adam, and Adam’s sleep and Eve’s creation). See Gen. 1-2.
 - (iii) Day 7 seems like it never ended (therefore very long!): The previous six days creative activities end with the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning,” while the seventh ends with God’s rest. Some would say that rest continues till today.
 - (iv) The fact that the word *day* refers to a longer period of time in Genesis 2:4 should caution us about making dogmatic statements that the original readers would have certainly known that the author was talking about twenty-four-hour days.
 - (v) These points do not require us to believe in longer days, but they offer a possible meaning of texts (as passages that speak of the sun “rising” or “going down” do not require us to believe in an earth-centered universe).
 - (vi) In favor of a strict twenty-four-hour day for Genesis 1 (295)
 1. The expression “And there was evening, and there was morning....” (e.g., Gen. 1:5).

2. The third day cannot be very long because the sun does not come into being until the fourth day, and plants cannot live without the sun.
3. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the 10 Commandments the word *day* is used to mean a twenty-four-hour day. (Exo 20:8-11)
4. Question: Is there anywhere else the Hebrew Bible that uses the word “days” in the plural, especially when a number is attached, to refer to anything other than a twenty-four-hour days. (Response: Ex. 20:12 uses a plural form to refer to periods of time, and making a singular sense of periods of time plural is not difficult for a reader to understand, even if no other Old Testament example exists). (Exo 20:12)
5. Jesus indicated that Adam and Eve were not created billions of years after the beginning of creation. (Mar 10:6). Response:

Conclusion on length of Genesis 1 days: God has not chosen to give us enough information to come to a clear decision on this question.

2) Both “old earth” and “young earth” theories are valid options for Christians who believe the Bible today. (298)

a) “Old earth” (4.5 billion year old earth; 13-14 billion year old universe) theories of creation:

i) Day-age view (298):

(a) Each day of creation is a long period of time.

(b) Attracted to this view because of scientific evidence.

(i) Liquid magma, such as in California, take 1 million years to cool.

(ii) Continental drift could not have happened 20,000 years.

(iii) Coral reefs apparently take hundreds of thousands of years to form.

(c) Difficulties:

(i) The sequence of Gen 1 does not exactly correspond to current scientific understanding to the development of life (putting sea creatures—day 5—before trees—day 3—and other land animals—day 6—as well as fish—day 5—before birds).

(ii) The greatest difficulty: the sun is created millions of years after the creation of plants and trees (though the Hebrew verb *‘āsāh* in Gen. 1:16 can be taken as perfect—God “*had made*” the sun and moon earlier.).

ii) Literary framework view (300): The six days of Genesis 1 are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a literary “framework,” which the author uses to teach us about God’s creative activity. This framework is skillfully constructed so that the first three days and the second three days correspond to each other.

(a) Days of forming and filling

Days of forming

Day 1: Light and darkness separated

Day 2: Sky and waters separated

Day 3: Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees

Days of filling

Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars (lights in the heaven)

Day 5: Fish and birds

Day 6: Animals and man

(b) Strengths (301)

(i) Neat correspondence

(ii) Avoids conflicts with modern science

(iii) Avoids conflicts with Genesis 1 and 2 where man seems to be formed before plants and animals

(iv) Shows that Genesis 2:5 does not indicate literal twenty-four-hour days since there were not yet plants due to lack of rain (in the twenty-four-hour scheme plants could survive three or four days without rain).

(c) Points against the framework theory (302)

- (i) The parallels are not as neat as assumed (e.g., the sun, moon, and stars would be placed in the “firmament,” created on the second day, not the first).
 - (ii) We should not accept a theory because it relieves us from burden of trying to reconcile with science.
 - (iii) Those who have not adopted the framework theory do not see conflict between Genesis 1 and 2 (the latter merely recapitulates the former as detail important for the account of the creation of Adam and Eve).
 - (iv) Genesis 2:5 does not really say plants were not on the earth, just that God’s work of creation was not yet complete (a mist was coming up from the earth already). (Gen 2:4-6)
 - (v) Genesis strongly suggests a chronological sequence of events.
 - 1. A sequence in the increasing complexity of creation
 - 2. A sequence in numbered days (1-2-3-4-5-6-7)
 - (vi) This sequence is implied in the command to “rest” in Ex. 20:8-11.
- Conclusion on framework theory: It does not deny the truthfulness of Scripture, but upon closer inspection seems very unlikely.
- b) “Young earth” (10,000 to 20,000 years old) theories of creation (304)
 - i) Creation with an appearance of age (Mature Creationism) (304)
 - (a) The original creation must have had an “appearance of age” (e.g., Adam and Eve were created as mature adults, and the light they saw the first evening from most star would take thousands or even millions of years to reach the earth).
 - (b) Some object that this makes God an “apparent deceiver.” Yet, if God creates a mature Adam and Eve and tells us he did so, is he a “deceiver”?
 - (c) One significant problem with the appearance of age: fossils. Responsible Christians do not want to say that God scattered fossils of dead creatures throughout the earth to give it the appearance of age.
 - (d) Explanations for fossils: (a) current dating methods are incorrect by colossal proportions because of changes brought about by the fall or flood or (b) current dating methods are approximately correct, and the earth is many millions or billions of years old.
 - ii) Flood geology (306)
 - (a) Tremendous natural forces unleashed by the flood at the time of Noah (Gen. 6-9) significantly altered the face of the earth.
 - (b) This cause the creation of coal and diamonds, for example, within the space of a year rather than hundreds of millions of years, because of the extremely high pressure exerted by water on the earth.
 - (c) The geological arguments put forth by advocates of flood geology are technical and difficult for non-specialist evaluation.
 - (d) Flood geology advocates do not agree with either Christian or non-Christian scientists who have not acknowledged evidence of flood geology.
 - iii) Evidence from astronomy
 - (a) Why is all the evidence consistent with a universe about 13.7 billion years old?
- 3) Conclusions on the age of the earth (307)
- a) Several scientific arguments for an old earth seem persuasive:
 - i) Earth: fossil-bearing rocks, coral reefs, continental drift, and the similarity of results from different kinds of radiometric dating.
 - ii) Astronomy: stars appear to have been shining for about 13 billion years.
 - iii) The age of rocks, minerals, meteorites, and the moon all appear to have an age of 4.5 billion years old.
 - iv) The weight of evidence is increasing yearly.

- v) If the earth is only 10,000 years old, why didn't God make it look like it is 10,000 years old? And why did he make the universe give abundant evidence that makes it look like it is 13.7 billion years old?

4) The need for further understanding (308)

- a) I agree that it is much easier to read Genesis 1 as 24 hour days. This is still possibly correct.
- b) But the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old earth view.
- c) The age of the earth is not directly taught in Scripture. We can think about it only by drawing more or less probable inferences from Scripture.
- d) It seems best to 1) admit God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns and 2) encourage evangelical scientists and theologians who fall in both the young and old earth camps to begin work together more humbly and cooperatively.
Jam 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.
- e) I wrote in 1994: "It is likely that scientific research in the next ten or twenty years will tip the weight of evidence decisively toward either a young earth or old earth position, and the weight of biblical scholarly opinion will begin to shift decisively in one direction or another." (*Systematic Theology*, 309)
- f) This should not cause alarm, because the truthfulness of Scripture is not threatened (Gen. 1 leaves enough uncertainty that either position is possible).

F. Application (309)

- a. The material universe is good in itself.
- b. We should seek to be like early Christians, who "received their food with glad and generous hearts" (Ac. 2:46).
- c. This doctrine should encourage some Christians to do scientific and technological research into the goodness of God's abundant creation.
- d. We recognize more clearly how science and technological study glorifies God, enabling us to discover how incredibly wise, powerful, and skillful God was in his work of creation.
Psa 111:2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.
- e. We can wholeheartedly enjoy creative activities (artistic, musical, athletic, domestic, literary, etc.) with an attitude of thanksgiving that our Creator God enables to imitate him in our creativity.

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