

“In The Beginning” The Biblical View Of Creation, Part 2

The 4th century Nicene Creed begins with these words which record the consensus of the Church on the origin of the creation and mankind: “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.” This stout affirmation reminds us the Bible is clear that God created the universe and all that is in it. Yet, how did He do it? Did He speak it into existence and then create mankind and all other creatures after their own kind so that variety and more complex life forms were present from the beginning? Or, did He create simple forms of life in such a way that they evolved into higher and higher forms—eventually accounting for mankind and all the different species? In other words, did He create in the fashion that Christians have traditionally believed or did He use the means of evolution?

Those who believe that the different species and the variation we find in the world are explainable by the process of evolution are often termed “Theistic Evolutionists”. The question we want to take up is this: Does the Bible’s teaching on creation allow for us to believe that God created by means of Theistic Evolution? For this to be the case, we must be able to read Genesis 1 in such a way that it allows for a very old earth and that it somehow allows for the data present there to be read figuratively—leaving room for evolution. There are three ways that this can be attempted: (1) By seeing a large gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2—known as the Gap Theory. (2) By understanding Genesis 1 as poetry. (3) By understanding the word “day” to refer to a period of time much longer than a twenty-four hour period. Let’s examine each of these possibilities.

The Gap Theory

The first way that some make room for evolution in Genesis 1 is by seeing a large gap of time between 1:1 and 1:2 which would allow for the evolutionary processes that have become popular since Darwin’s 1859 publishing of On The Origin Of Species. Their reasoning is as follows: The phrase “without form and void” in verse 2 is used in Jeremiah 4:23 to speak of the judgment of chaos brought upon Judah because of sin. Since this is the case, what seems to be the message of these first two verses is this: God created the world which rebelled against Him. As a result, He judged the world by destroying it and bringing it into a state of chaos. As such, Genesis 1:2 describes this post-rebellion, judged world—it was without form and void.

As you begin this devotional article with your family it will be helpful to read Genesis 1.

In a 1998 Answers In Genesis newsletter author Ken Ham wrote: “Recently, one of our associates sat down with a highly respected world-class Hebrew scholar and asked him this question: ‘If you started with the Bible alone, without considering any outside influences whatsoever, could you ever come up with millions or billions of years of history for the Earth and universe?’ The answer from this scholar? ‘Absolutely not!’”

Jeremiah 4:23: “I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.”

What we read, then, in Genesis 1:2ff. is of the recreation of the world which was in six literal 24 hour days and in the recent past (e.g. 6-10,000 years ago). What this means is that the world is quite a bit older than what traditionally has been thought. The older earth allows for the evolutionary processes to have accounted for the fossils which evolutionists argue support their position.

There are a number of problems with this understanding of Genesis 1.

First, the grammar will not allow for it. The word “and” at the beginning of verse 2 never introduces an independent sequential clause—“and then later this happened....” Instead, what we have in verses 1-2 is typical Hebrew historical narrative. Hebrews like to begin such an account with a general overview (v. 1) and then a more specific delineation of what happened (verses 2ff.).

Second, the phrase “without form and void” in verse 2 does denote chaos or lack of order, however, it does not necessarily demand judgment-induced chaos where order had formerly been present.

Third, if the Gap Theory were true, this would mean that sin entered the world prior to Adam and Eve which would contradict Romans 5:12-19. This is so problematic to make the theory biblically impossible.

Finally, in Exodus 20:11 we see that the fourth commandment speaks of the six days of creation, not the six days of recreation.

We must conclude that the Gap Theory does not allow us to read an evolutionary process into Genesis 1.

Genesis 1 As Poetry

Another way some attempt to read evolution into Genesis 1 is by asserting that the text is poetry and, as such, it is figurative. Therefore, what it teaches bottom-line is that God created. However, we cannot press it too far to tell us anything about how He created or in what period of time He created.

There are a number of pieces of evidence which lead us to see Genesis as something other than poetry or highly figurative.

First, the Hebrew language has fairly clear indicators of poetry. We do not find those indicators in this text.

Next, we have already seen that 1:1 most likely serves as a summary statement for the entire account which is an indicator that this passage is meant to be read as historical narrative.

Finally, the New Testament sees this passage as historical narrative. Consider: Jesus viewed it as historical (Mt. 19:4-5; Mk. 10:6-7); Paul viewed the account of Adam and Eve’s

<p>Old Testament scholar, Bruce K. Waltke, wrote in <u>Creation And Chaos</u>, 21-22: “But the [and] introducing verse 2 is... the ‘waw conjunctive.’ The waw conjunctive may introduce various types of clauses...but it does not introduce an independent sequential clause. It is inconceivable that Moses would have used a construction which nowhere else indicates sequence when other constructions were open to him, had this been his intent.”</p>
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creation and sin as historical (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Tim. 2:13); Peter viewed the creation as historical (2 Peter 3:5); and finally, Hebrews views the creation account as historical (Heb. 11:3).

The Word “Day”

So far we have seen that the first two possibilities for reading evolutionary processes into Genesis have come up short. But what about the third—that the word “day” means a longer period of time than a 24 hour period and therefore the first two chapters could describe a very long process—not one merely a week long?

The word for “day,” *yom*, most likely refers to a 24 hr. period of time here for the following reasons.

To begin with, this term is almost always used to refer to a 24 hr. period when it is used, as it is in this chapter, with an ordinal numeral (such as “first,” “second,” etc.) as opposed to a cardinal numeral (“one,” “two,” etc.).

Additionally, the days of Genesis 1 are divided into darkness and light. This is the typical Jewish designation used for a 24 hr. day which begins at 6:00pm. Such a specific designation would seem confusing to the original Hebrew reader, if long periods of time were meant.

Finally, the observance of the Sabbath by man is based upon God’s Sabbath rest on day seven (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17). The analogy would break down if the comparison were too dissimilar—especially in light of how specific God was in the Old Testament with how the Hebrews were to approach their days, weeks, and years. They were to rest one day in seven; observe three one-week-long festivals a year, etc. It is very difficult to believe that Moses was writing that since God created in six long, unspecified periods of time and rested on a seventh long, unspecified period of time, that the Israelites were to follow suit with a weekly one day Sabbath.

Conclusion

We could offer other evidence against evolution in Genesis 1, such as God making things after their own kind (see 1:11, 12, 21, 25)—and thus their not evolving across species boundaries. However, our point is sufficiently made. God created all things—including varied species, higher, complex life, and mankind. We cannot account for the existence of the universe or of the variety we see by means of evolution. If we believe that the scriptures are our only ultimate source of authority, that they are from God (2 Tim. 3:16) and as such cannot mislead or lie (Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 2:2), we must conclude that there was no room in creation for the processes of evolution.

If I were to say, “I can jump like L. A. Lakers’ basketball star Koby Bryant,” there may be an element of truth in the statement. After all, both of us would use a similar form to jump, both of us would use our legs and the same muscles in our legs. Yet, there would be so much difference, such a distance between his jumping and mine that the analogy would break down. It simply would not work. In the same way the Hebrews would have heard the message: “In six periods of time God created and rested on the seventh. Likewise, you also work six and rest the seventh day.” It is questionable whether any original reader of Genesis could have found such an analogy possible or helpful.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that we understand that Genesis 1 does not allow room for evolutionary processes?
2. Let's review what we read. If someone said to you that Genesis 1 could support creation by evolutionary process, how would you answer them?
3. Do you have more questions? Check out the Answers In Genesis web site: www.answersingenesis.org.