

## **Biblical Theology**

### **Unit 2: Doctrine of God – Lesson 10: Creation Part 2**

#### **Differing Views on the Age of the Earth**

- ***Old Earth Argument:*** Belief that the earth is 4.5 billion years old; universe is 13-14 billion years.
  1. ***Day-Age View*** - Six days of creation were not twenty-four hour earth days, but long periods of time – millions of years.
    - Support:
      - Word for day in Genesis 1, “yom” sometimes refers to period, not a day.
        - *Genesis 2:4 - the day the Lord God made earth and heavens.*
      - Day 6 events likely took longer than twenty-four hours.
        - Creation of animals, creation of Adam, Finding helper for Adam, Creation of Eve, Instructions from God, naming the animals.
      - Day 7 seemingly never ended
        - *Hebrews 4:11 - Let us therefore strive to enter that rest*
      - Genesis 2:4 indicates original audience knew of long process of creation
      - Modern Science Indicates Old Earth
        - Earth days pre-earth, liquid magma, continental drift, coral reefs
    - Difficulty:
      - Genesis 1 sequence is inconsistent with what is scientifically possible.
        - Plants and trees (Day 3), Sun, moon, stars (Day 4)
        - Insects (Day 5), Plants and trees (Day 3)
  2. ***Literary Framework View*** – The six days of Genesis 1 are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a memorable literary “framework,” which the author uses to teach about God’s creation.
    - Support:
      - 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
    - Difficulty:
      - Genesis strongly suggests a chronological sequence of events.
        - Increasing complexity of creation as God creates
        - Days are numbered (1,2,3,4,5,6) with mornings and evenings
- ***Young Earth Argument:*** Belief that the earth is between 6,000 to 20,000 years old.
  1. ***Six, Twenty-Four Hour Day View*** – Six days of creation were literal 24 hour earth days.
    - Support:
      - The expression “And there was evening, and there was morning...”
      - 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.
      - It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the 10 Commandments the word day is used to mean a twenty-four-hour day. (Exodus 20:8-11)
      - Flood geology could explain apparent “age” of the earth.
        - Extinction of dinosaurs.
        - Creation of coal, diamonds.
        - Apparent continental drifts.
        - Deserts that used to be oceans
      - Can be seen as hermeneutically irresponsible not to take Gen. 1 literally

- Difficulty:
  - Scientific evidence indicates old earth / universe
    - Flood geology doesn't explain apparent age of universe.
    - Astrological observation clearly indicates presents of stars (no longer existing) thousands, millions, billions of light years away.
- 2. **Mature Creationism** – Six days of creation were literally 24 hour earth days, but God created the universe with an appearance of age.
  - Support:
    - God is the creator of time and is not bound to follow its rules.
    - Adam and Eve seem to have been created as mature adults.
    - Plants, Animals were created bypassing “natural” growth / development.
  - Difficulty:
    - Age of fossils. (Some assert that this makes God an apparent deceiver.)

### **Other Considerations**

- Should we use genealogies to date the earth?
  - **Young earth:** Yes. We have enough info to approximate timing of events / genealogies.
  - **Old Earth:** No. Matt 1:8-9 omits three generations of same genealogy in 1 Chron 3:10-12
- Can scientific methods and measurements be trusted?
  - **Young Earth:** No. Inconsistencies in results and methods.
  - **Old Earth:** Yes. Though methods and measurements may no be exact, margin of error does not account for billions of years.
- Was there death before the fall?
  - **Young Earth:** No. Sin brought death.
  - **Old Earth:** Yes. Just not for humans. (Adam and Eve's food, Romans 5:12)
- What about dinosaurs?
  - **Young Earth:** Existed with man.
  - **Old Earth:** Have apparent age greater than mankind.

### **Settling the Matter**

- Francis Schaeffer, No Final Conflict (1975): When all the facts are rightly understood, there will be “no final conflict” between Scripture and natural science.
  - There is a possibility that God created a “grown-up” universe.
  - There is a possibility of a long day in Genesis 1.
  - There is a possibility that the flood affected the geological data.
  - The use of the word “kinds” in Genesis 1 may be quite broad.
  - There is a possibility of the death of animals before the fall.
  - The scriptures don't require a belief in Young Earth or Old Earth.
- Caution to those who believe in Young Earth: As scripture is authoritative, embrace science.
- Caution to those who believe in Old Earth: Maintain proper hermeneutics and biblical authority.
- Caution to both:
  - It's ok to disagree - Don't require others to agree with you.
  - Young earth people are not ideological simpletons.
  - Old earth people are not bible-trampling heathens.
  - There is a danger spending too much time arguing over differences.

### **Conclusion**

- God created the entire universe out of nothing and made it good.
- He did so in an orderly fashion using his infinite wisdom and power.
- Creation is distinct from God yet dependent on him.
- God created the universe to show his glory.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see as the strongest support and greatest difficulty to the Old Earth view?
2. What do you see as the strongest support and greatest difficulty to the Old Earth view?
3. How can you guard yourself from thinking less of someone who may disagree with your view of creation?

### **Reading Assignment**

*None*