

In The Beginning, part 1

Creation Series, Part 1

Genesis 1:1a, 2-10-2002

Summary: *The Bible opens with the statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is the foundation of the entire Christian faith, but there has been much debate over when the beginning was. There is no question the Bible and evolutionary theory are in conflict, but the question is, which is more reliable and which one is better evidence that should override the counter-evidence?*

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I can't tell you with absolute certainty what the most important statement in the whole Bible is. But I can tell you what truth was so crucially important that God made it the very first statement in the Bible:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

In the beginning

Those are striking words because they are so unique. God is going to tell us about the very beginning! No one else can do that. Ask a scientist, "Can you tell me with absolute certainty what took place at the very beginning?" and the best you will get is a guess. And the best guesses of a naturalist

are painfully unsatisfactory. Either they have to say, *“In the beginning the universe was already there”* or *“in the beginning the universe spontaneously popped into existence on its own out of nothing.”* If they say it was already there, they have to deal with the philosophical and scientific problem of an eternal universe. It’s a scientific problem because it is the opposite of the conclusion all our scientific observations would call for, and it’s supported by no scientific data. All the scientific data we have support the second law of thermodynamics. Everything is running down, moving from order to disorder. Heat is dissipating and becoming disorganized. According to all the observations of science, the universe would die a heat loss death in a finite amount of time. Some have suggested, *“Maybe before the Big Bang the second law of thermodynamics was reversed.”* Well so much for science!

Think about that argument. Is it likely that the second law operated in reverse with no intelligent power operating it? You may not be a scientist, but based on what you know from common sense, what is the likelihood of that? Let me ask you this, can you think of anything, scientifically, that would be less likely than that? How about gravity reversing itself? If you arrive home and there is play dough on the ceiling, and your child said, *“Gravity must have reversed itself,”* would you buy that? If they ever discovered some context in which two masses repelled each other like the same poles of magnets, I would be surprised, but if Tracy ever opened the dryer and found all the clothes had tumbled themselves into folded up piles divided into categories, I would be exceedingly surprised. The next time you hear someone suggest that, ask them if they can think of anything that would be less likely, and why. And if they can’t think of anything, ask why they hold to the most unlikely scenario imaginable.

Maybe the second law of thermodynamics was reversed? You know what that sounds like to me? It sounds like the response of someone who is so desperate to avoid some other answer that he doesn’t mind making a fool of himself. So an eternal universe is a scientific problem, and it is also a logical impossibility. There is one thing that everything we observe has in common....and that is it came from or originated from something else. A tree came from a seed; a seed came from another tree, etc. A car was made at a factory, the factory was built with bricks, the bricks came from stones, the stones, etc. People came from other people. Energy comes from the sun. Burgers come from cows. Newspapers come from the presses. Bills come from...everywhere... Everything we observe has one

thing in common. Everything that you can see came from something else.

The philosophers express this idea by saying, *“Everything we observe in the universe is contingent.”* (That is, it is dependent upon something else for its existence.” When you have a string of contingent things, it had to originate somewhere; you can’t just say it was going on forever.

Philosophers call that an infinite regress. When you are trying to trace the source of contingent things, an infinite regress doesn’t answer the question, it begs the question. If Nikki shows up with a hundred dollar bill and I ask where she got it, she may say, *“from my friend.”*

“Where did she get it?”

“Her dad.”

“Where did he get it?”

“From his cousin...”

No matter how many people you trace it back through, logic requires that it must have originated somewhere. You can’t just say, *“The money didn’t originate anywhere, people have just been getting it from other people for all eternity.”* If there is a chandelier hanging, you may not be able to see the ceiling where it is attached, but it’s not a logical possibility that there is no ceiling, that the chandelier is being held up by an infinite chain of links that are not attached to something that supplies the support. So the idea of an eternal universe violates both science and logic. And a universe that pops into existence by itself isn’t any better. There is no rational, logical or scientific reason to assume that matter that never existed before can suddenly bring itself into existence. Things that don’t exist don’t have enough power to bring themselves into existence. In fact, things that don’t exist don’t have any power at all, because they don’t exist. That’s one of the drawbacks of not being in existence, you don’t have any power.

Which is the more rational assumption, that an all-powerful being had enough power to create everything, or that something with no power at all had enough power to create everything? The problem with the naturalist’s book of origins is that it starts on page two, and skips the part about how everything came into existence (which is a pretty important point in a discussion of origins!) Ask a naturalist where everything came from and he will tell you a story about how everything was already in existence and then exploded. That’s like if someone asked you about the origin of this building and you answered, *“Well, two years ago someone painted it.”* That doesn’t tell you where it came from, it just tells you what happened to it after it was already in existence. If you push them on the question, they will

resist. *“We just don’t know where everything came from. Now let me get on with my discussion of evolution. . .”* And the origin of the universe is dismissed as a minor point. They say the question of how everything got here is outside the bounds of scientific inquiry. That may be, but what could be a more scientifically obvious fact than this: Everything is here! I’m no scientist, but my guess is that you could run empirical tests and discover that the things that are in existence are indeed in existence. How did that happen? There is only one place you can go for a reliable answer to that question and that is to **GENESIS 1**, *“In the beginning.”*

Before we look at what happened in the beginning, let’s address the question of when that was. The word “beginning” is normally followed by the word “of”. We speak of the beginning of something; we are not used to seeing the word all by itself. In the beginning? In the beginning of what? It’s not the beginning for God because He has existed for all eternity before this happened. Some may assume it means the beginning of creation, but what would be the point of that? At the beginning of creation, God began to create? Isn’t that a little redundant? It’s not the beginning of anything, it’s just the beginning. It’s the earliest beginning of what we are able to contemplate. Our brains can’t handle eternity past, so God gave us a point that for us is the ultimate beginning. God has shows us what has taken place all the way back to that point, but not before. What happened before the beginning is completely hidden from us. If we try to speculate about before the beginning, we just end up going in circles. It’s hard to make sense of the fact that God waited an eternity before creating the world – why didn’t He do it a billion years sooner? But if He did, we would still have the question. Some people have asked, *“What was God doing before He created the world?”* Augustine’s answer was: *“Perhaps He was preparing hell for people who stick their noses into mysteries.”* I doubt that, but it does make the point, you can see how fruitless it is to speculate about before the beginning.

In **JOB 36:26** Elihu said, ***“Behold, God is great and we know Him not, neither can the number of His years be searched out.”*** For us the beginning is the beginning, and the only thing we know of before that point is summed up in **GENESIS 1:1 AND JOHN 1:1**. In the beginning, before anything was made, God was already there. That’s as close as we can come to understanding the eternity of God. Think back as far as humanly possible to think, and God had already been there forever. In the beginning there was no one else.

ISAIAH 44:24

“I am YHWH, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.”

In DANIEL 7 He is called “*the Ancient of Days – the One whose days stretch way back before anyone else.*”

REVELATION 1:8

“I am the Alpha and Omega,” says the Lord God, “Who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

PSALM 90:2

“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

So God is the only One who can tell us about the beginning. There is a huge debate among Christians over when the beginning was, so. . .

What’s at stake? Why make a big deal about the age of the earth? Why spend time arguing against theistic evolution or progressive creationism?

Let me explain this a bit, you have. . .

Naturalistic evolutionists = they reject God and says everything happened by itself.

Theistic evolutionists = believe that evolution took place by God’s hand.

Progressive Creationists = believe that God created in bits and pieces over vast ages of time.

Literal Creationists = believe it was just done in six, 24 hour days.

Can those people be Christians? Sure! So why nit-pick about the differences among Christians? Why don’t we all just join forces and argue against naturalistic, atheistic evolution and agree to disagree about the age of the earth?

First of all, not many people buy into a completely naturalistic view. According to surveys, the vast majority of the population in the U.S. believes in theistic evolution. There is a tiny group that reject God altogether and a tiny group that believe in a six-day creation, but well over 80% of the people believe that evolution happened and was driven by God. There are too many obvious problems with pure naturalism. There are all kinds of logical and scientific impossibilities with pure naturalistic evolution, and so people want to include God so every time there is a weak point in the theory you can just fill God in – kind of a “God of the gaps” approach. So I’m not going to spend a lot of time arguing against naturalistic evolution, because aside from a few extreme liberals in universities who

are mostly out of touch with reality anyway, there aren't that many who buy into it. Besides, most of the creationist literature that is being produced right now argues against naturalistic evolution. And they have done a great job. It seems to me just between Michael Behe and Philip Johnson, those two guys have disproved the possibility of naturalistic evolution so soundly and decisively, that not much remains to be said. Behe has dismantled the theory from the standpoint of microbiology (Behe is not a Christian, he is a credentialed microbiologist who has demonstrated that the amount of encoded information in DNA can be corrupted but information cannot be added. He has also argued from the irreducible complexity side.)

Philip Johnson has argued from the logical and philosophical standpoint and has proved evolution impossible without God. So if you wonder if the process of evolution could possibly happen outside of miraculous intervention by God, just read those two guys. Even if the naturalist could get past the problem of where the material for the big bang came from, the idea that if you wait long enough, hydrogen gas moving through space will eventually become human beings who can contemplate their own existence is so ridiculous, it's not worthy of our time. My concern is with theistic evolution. That is **not** a harmless error and it has massive ramifications.

The basis of a person's worldview is rooted in his understanding of origins. The age of the earth is not just a tertiary curiosity on the side somewhere. It is right at the center of the entire Christian worldview. The theistic evolutionist believes God created a primitive, simplistic world which contained no people for well over 99% of its existence. They believe God created everything, but that He did so by means of the evolutionary process. In other words, God created the world we see around us by means of a brutal struggle of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. We have fossil remains of animals that had cancer and deformities and all kinds of horrible diseases that the theistic evolutionists believe those to be millions of years old, well before Adam sinned.

The evolutionary worldview postulates God creating a world of horrible pain, sorrow, suffering, disease, brutality, starvation, injury, weakness, decay and death. They believe God created a world like that and then looked at all that pain and death and said, "*It is good! It is very good!*"

The biblical worldview is that God created a world that actually was good, and that death, suffering, etc. were introduced only by man's sin and the curse. But some people say, *but maybe there was death before Adam, and Genesis 3 and Romans 5 are talking only about human death.*" One day my son, Josiah, poured gasoline on our little dog and completely soaked her. Within minutes the gas began to irritate her skin and she began to panic from the pain. While we were scrubbing her in the bathtub she was squealing and crying, she was just beside herself with pain. Finally it was too much for her and she just sat perfectly still, because it hurt too much to even move. I'm not a big animal lover, and I don't get too emotionally affected by animals, but this was hard to take even for me. You cannot tell me that God could create a situation like that and say, *"It is very good."*

As Christians, our answer to the problem of evil and pain is to point to sin. But if God created it and called it good long before sin, we have a real problem. Secondly, the fact that God not only created, but accomplished it through divine fiat or command plays an important role in how we think about Him.

Psalm 33:8

"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him."

Why? Verse 9 says, ***"for he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."***

The reason all the world should fear God and stand in awe of Him is not just because He is behind the creation, not because He oversaw it and superintended it... The reason every person should revere Him is because of the **way** He did it. Not indirectly through natural processes, not through minute changes from life and death struggles. He did it by divine fiat. He spoke and it happened. The implication is that it was immediate, just like Genesis 1 says. It doesn't say, 'And God said, let the dry ground appear and within a few billion years some gases began to swirl.' God spoke it and it happened.

Third, what is our ultimate hope? Throughout Scripture creation is tied to both judgment and redemption. After a discussion of the creation and the flood, Peter talks about our hope, 2 Peter 3:13 says, ***"we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteousness."*** What will that creation be like? Peter is talking about Isaiah 65, which says in verses 17-25, ***"Behold, I will create new***

heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create.” God is not finished creating. The hope that we live for is a future creation of new heavens and a new earth. And just like the creation of the first heavens and earth, it will be good. The question is, when God promises us something good, what is His idea of good? If it took him 15 billion years of chaos, destruction, decay, mutation, death, struggle, pain, disease and agony to create the first earth, how many umpteen billion years will the new heavens and earth take? Is that God’s idea of a good creation? Just keep reading. . . .

Verse 19 says, “...; **the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.**”

20Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.”

God’s idea of a good earth is not one with weeping and crying and death and killing. Is it going to be survival of the fittest? No, look at verse 25...

25“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neighbor harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

That’s the garden paradise restored, but the theistic evolutionists would have us believe there never was a garden paradise to restore things to. If our hope for the future is based on the paradise of Eden do you see how important it is that there really was an initial paradise and that it was good?

Isaiah 51:3 “**The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.**”

The reason we can be sure of God’s promise about the new earth is God’s power displayed in the creation of the old earth. I have read theistic evolutionists try to claim evolution somehow glorifies God and magnifies Him as Creator. That is an amazing argument. I wonder if those people are looking forward to another ordeal like that in the next creation. What about heaven? Will God be glorified in heaven by the strong ones killing off the weak and diseased ones? If this earth took 15 billion years, how long before the new Jerusalem is up and running? As Christians we do not look forward to a new earth that is dominated by disease, suffering and death, because we understand that those are the very reasons there will be a new

heaven and a new earth, so those things can be eliminated forever. The difference between the naturalistic worldview and the Christian worldview is stark, they cannot be mixed together. It goes way beyond how old a rock appears to be. The evolutionist believes the world came into existence bad. All the things we consider bad were there right from the start, but now things are improving because of evolution. Fifteen billion years of improving has gotten us to Hitler and Stalin, millions of parents torturing and killing their own children, murder, rape, brutality, theft, cancer, AID's, deformities, Down's Syndrome, and countless millions of other problems.

The Bible says, 'No, that's backwards'. Everything was created perfectly good and God spoke into existence a beautiful, wonderful paradise, a garden paradise. But then man sinned and brought upon himself and the creation God's curse. Someday God will eliminate evil, eliminating suffering, sin and death, and reverse the curse and restore paradise. Romans 8:20-24 says, ***"(20) the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (22) We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (23) Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (24) For in this hope we were saved."*** So you can see this is not a minor issue. And it's not the age of the earth itself that matters so much, but all the baggage that comes along with it.

The Implications of "Old Earth"

Not only is there unbiblical baggage that comes along with the old earth view, but it has important implications regarding your view of Scripture is general. While professing to believe the Bible, theistic evolutionists end up almost completely ignoring Genesis 1 and 2. They claim, *"We believe it. It's just that it's allegorical and symbolic."* But if you read their writings, you find they spend a lot of time telling you what Genesis 1 and 2 doesn't mean, but very little time talking about what it does mean. That's because if theistic evolution is true, Genesis 1 and 2 are either wrong or, at best, meaningless. They say, *"But we believe God is the Creator! That means we accept Genesis 1 and 2."* But Genesis 1 and 2 say a lot more than just

that God is the Creator.

If theistic evolution is true, what is the meaning of the rest of it? Is there a way to harmonize any of it (Genesis 1) with evolutionary theory?

Evolutionists: Sun and stars exist before the earth.

Bible: Earth is four days older than the sun and stars

E: Sun much older than the moon

B: Created the same day

E: Land first, then oceans

B: Oceans first, then land

E: The first light on earth from the sun

B: Light on earth prior to the sun

E: The sun existed before land plants on earth

B: Land plants existed one day before the sun

E: Dinosaurs extinct before man existed

B: Dinosaurs created the same day as man

E: Reptiles before birds

B: Birds before reptiles

E: Land mammals before marine mammals

B: Marine mammals before land mammals

E: Death before Adam (in fact, it was by means of death that Adam came to be)

B: Death only after (it was through Adam that death came to be)

E: God created through the indirect process of allowing natural laws to operate

B: God created as a direct action by divine fiat (command)

E: We know about the nature of the creation process, because we observe it today through science.

B: No, creation is over. It came at the end of the 6th day.

That last point is significant. Whatever means God used to create, it is no longer happening. If theistic evolution were true, and God created by means of natural laws – laws of physics, motion, chemistry, probability, etc. – if the creation was brought about by disease, decay, toil, struggle, killing, pain, suffering and death, tell me – what ended on day seven?

GENESIS 2:2-4

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. 4This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.”

The whole premise of theistic evolution is, “*These are the things we observe, and therefore they must have been the means of creation.*” But if you observe them today, that’s proof; they were **not** the means of creation. If creation were brought about by evolution, how do you explain the fact that to this day we still have the laws of physics, and we still have disease, decay, toil, struggle, killing, pain, suffering and death? Scripture always refers to the creation in the past tense, not the present.

MATTHEW 25:34

Jesus says, “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

Creation is not ongoing. Old Earth affects your view of the purpose of creation:

ISAIAH 45:18

***“For this is what the LORD says--
he who created the heavens,
he is God;
he who fashioned and made the earth,
he founded it;
he did not create it to be empty,
but formed it to be inhabited—“***

If we can’t know if Genesis 1 is literal based on grammar and the rules of language; if we have to have scientific information to know what it means, then who’s to say that’s not the case in the rest of the Bible? What does science tell us about resurrections from the dead? They don’t happen. So

must we assume the resurrection accounts of Christ are allegory or myth? What about the second coming, judgment day, the millennial Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, the eternal state? Do we have to wait until we can make scientific observations before we will know if those passages are literal or symbolic of something completely different?

Genesis 1 is the foundation of the entire Christian faith. If you can't accept Genesis 1 at face value, you will probably also choke on Genesis 2. Next goes Genesis 3 and the garden of Eden. Now you have no explanation for the existence of evil, and God's promises to restore the creation ring absolutely hollow – who wants to restore a primordial soup, or a bunch of hydrogen floating through space? Who wants a restoration back to cave men or dragging our knuckles on the ground? If you can't buy Genesis 1-3, you're really not going to like 4 and 5, which give a chronology that dates the earth at 6000 years. You won't like the flood or the tower of Babel, and the next thing you know or the chronology of chapter 11 and then, of course, you aren't signed on until chapter 12.

What about the many, many New Testament references to Genesis 1-11? Every last one of them takes Genesis 1-11 literally. And many of those references are in key sections that set forth the Gospel. Keep going into Exodus, where you read of all the plagues. Maybe you want to try to reduce those to natural phenomena, so the plague of darkness ends up being an eclipse or a real cloudy day. Now you have just thrown out a huge portion of the Psalms, which constantly rejoice of the miraculous nature of the plagues as demonstrations of God's saving power. And you have struck a blow at the Gospel itself, which is based on the exodus. Those who are claiming to be integrating science with the Bible, in fact are mostly accepting every popular scientific theory, and simply altering the meaning of the Bible. When there is an apparent conflict, it's always the Bible that has to give. They never assume, *"Hmmm, a conflict. Our scientific theory must be in error. We should correct it to fit the Bible."* That's not integration; it's just a Trojan horse type infusion of humanism into Scripture. What should we do when scientific theories seem to conflict with the Bible? We are addressing that very question in Sunday school right now. Do we have to set aside rational thinking and just believe something we know isn't true? Of course not. But neither should we always give the benefit of the doubt to popular scientific theories which have a much less than perfect track record. It is not irrational to believe something in spite of counter-evidence. We do it all the time.

If my speedometer says 30 mph, that is excellent evidence that I am traveling at about 30 mph, because generally speaking speedometers don't give radically errant readings. But if I look out my window and see that I'm zooming past all the cars on the interstate, and phone poles are passing in a blur, and the dotted line is starting to look solid, and I pass a radar sign that clocks me at 160mph, then I will begin to believe that I'm actually traveling quite fast – and I'll believe that in spite of the counter-evidence from my speedometer. If I read in the paper that S. Boulder Rd. was closed all the way through Lafayette yesterday all day for a parade, I will believe it. But then if I talk to twenty people, all of whom drove on that section throughout the day who claim there was no parade and the road was open, I will believe that in spite of the counter-evidence.

There is no question the Bible and evolutionary theory are in conflict. The question is which is more reliable when it comes to the very beginning? Which one is the better evidence that should override the counter-evidence? Well that is an introduction to what is at stake with this debate. Let me tell you what my plan is, I'm not going to go argue science and make a fool of myself. I'm not a scientist; I don't think that is the way to answer the questions. What I'm going to do is show you what the Bible says.

BENEDICTION:

ISAIAH 43:1-4

“But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you...he who formed you: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior... 4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you”