



"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY 2005

What's Happening?

[Penrose in Seattle](#)

Roger Penrose, the esteemed Oxford mathematician, will speak about the laws of the universe Wednesday, February 23rd, at Seattle Town Hall. Tickets are \$5. For tickets or more information visit the Seattle Town Hall website at www.townhallseattle.org.

[Jay Richards to Speak](#)

Jay Richards, vice-president of the Discovery Institute, will speak on *The Privileged Planet*, the book he co-authored. The event will be held Thursday, March 10th, at the Emerald Heights Academy in Bellevue. For more information, go to www.discovery.org.

[Educators Conference](#)

The chapter will be sponsoring a booth at the NW Christian Educators Conference at Overlake Christian Church, March 11-12. This is a great opportunity to put RTB materials in the hands of local educators. If you would like to contribute, see our address on the back page.

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No Animal Death Before the Fall: Doctrine or Dogma?

GREG MOORE

The Bible clearly states there was no human death before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. But when did animals first experience death? Young-earth creationists maintain all death—both human and animal—is the result of Adam and Eve’s sin (known as the Fall). Old-earth creationists maintain there was animal death inside, outside and before the Garden of Eden.

This is not a new issue. Nor is it simply a conflict between science and Scripture. Rather, there is rich history of discussion in the church regarding the impact of the Fall. What has changed is the tone of the debate. Many young-earth creationists insist animal death before the Fall is not Biblical. Some go so far as to label the old-earth view heretical.



Given these charges, it is important to take a critical look at the animal death issue. My intent is not to denigrate the young-earth view but merely to expose some of the weaknesses in their arguments. It is important to note that these arguments do not have a long history within Christianity—they only became popularized within the last 50 years.¹ By the late nineteenth century, even the most conservative Christian apologists conceded that the Bible allowed for an ancient earth and pre-Edenic life.²

"Animal Death Would Not Be Part of a 'Very Good' Creation"

This argument focuses on God’s statement in Genesis 1:13 that everything He created was “very good.” Young-earth creationists claim God wouldn’t have called the creation “very good” if it included animal death because death is not good. Ken Ham puts it this way:

The death of man and the animals was not part of the original creation. If a Christian accepts the history of death over millions of years, then when God stated in Genesis 1:31 that everything He made was “very good,” this would mean that death, suffering, violence, and diseases ... were also “very good.”³

See ANIMAL DEATH, page 5

Michael Lienau “Cascadia: The Hidden Fire”

If you missed the January 17th chapter meeting, you missed a great presentation. The featured speaker was Michael Lienau an award-winning producer and director. Michael is a long time supporter of Reasons to Believe and produced the original “Journey to Creation” video. Some of Michael’s other accomplishments include: “The Fire Below Us”, a seven-time award winning documentary on the Mount St. Helens eruption; “Not Our Son,” a CBS Movie-of-the-Week about America’s most prolific serial arsonist; and “Tell the World about Us,” a story of the fate of some MIAs-POWs in the Vietnam war.

At the meeting, Michael showed his most recent documentary, “Cascadia: The Hidden Fire.” This video takes an indepth look at the earthquake situation in Cascadia, the coastal region from northern California to southern British Columbia. It examines the current theory about plate tectonics in this region, including recent research into whether the coastal plates move in sections or as one large structure. It discusses the fault lines that lie beneath most major cities in the Pacific



Northwest. It also looks the geological record of past quakes and tsunamis both on the ocean coast and at inland cities like Seattle and Portland.

The conclusion? It’s really not a question of “if,” but “when” a major earthquake will occur in this region. The goal of the video is not to frighten people but to encourage them to take a realistic look at the earthquake risk we face. One point the video makes is people tend to think of recent quakes and, because they were able to survive them, they don’t

worry about the next one. But, the reality is the next quake could be the “big one”—something not seen in the recent past but has happened repeatedly in this region—and we need to be prepared for the worst case scenario.

Prior to showing the video, Michael shared his personal testimony with the chapter. While filming the Mount St. Helens documentary, “The Fire Below Us,” Michael and his crew were at the mountain immediately after the first eruption. A helicopter had dropped them off, they planned to shoot footage for several hours and then get picked up. However, as you may recall, there was a second eruption. This trapped them on the mountain for several days, something they were totally unprepared for. Due to metal in the volcanic ash, their compasses didn’t work and they literally walked in circles for days. Finally, with no hope of getting off the mountain alive, Michael prayed and told God he would commit his life to Christ if he would deliver them. A short time later, a helicopter miraculously spotted them and they were saved. Today, Michael is a devout Christian and his documentaries are part of his ministry to help people be prepared both physically and spiritually.

Several organizations plan to show his Mount St. Helens video as part of the anniversary of the eruption. His “Cascadia” video was recently shown on KTCS and may be repeated. We’ll try to keep you advised of future showings of these videos. For more information on Michael, or to purchase his videos, check out his website at www.globalnetproductions.com.

In the NEWS...

[Scientists Prove Evolution?](#)

This is the headline of the February issue of Discover magazine. The article describes how scientists have used a computer program that breeds digital organisms to prove that evolution works. (Hmm...didn’t that program require a designer?) Check it out at www.Discover.com.

[Branding of a Heretic](#)

This article in the January 31st Wall Street Journal reports on the harassment and intimidation by Darwinists at the Smithsonian against the editor who allowed an ID article in their publication. Go to www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110006220

[Design for Living](#)

Check out this guest commentary by Michael Behe in the New York Times February 7th op-ed page promoting Intelligent Design. Available at the Discovery Institute’s website at www.discovery.org/csc/.

[Beyond Belief](#)

This article in Focus on the Family magazine by Josh McDowell discusses how many of today’s young people believe truth is not true until they choose to believe it and why this is problematic. www.family.org/fofmag/sh/a0029041.cfm.

[Sovereignty and Compassion](#)

The recent tsunami has caused many people to reflect on the sovereignty of God. This Breakpoint article examines this issue. Go to: www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=15375

[Faith on Campus](#)

Is faith on campus possible? Yes, according to Mark Earley in this Breakpoint article. Available at www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14772

[Religion Weblog](#)

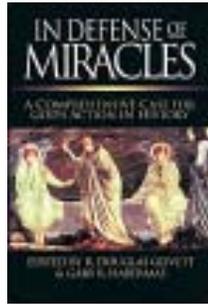
Jim Slagle of the Portland RTB Chapter writes a religion weblog for the online version of the Oregonian full of interesting articles. Go to www.oregonlive.com/weblogs/religionblog.

Book Reviews

In Defense of Miracles

R. Douglas Geivett & Gary Habermas
Intervarsity Press, 1997

Reviewer: Dan Williams



For the Christian, the concept of the miraculous must be more than a mere possibility. It is conceptually vital to a historically coherent faith in God. Since David Hume's denunciation of miracles in his, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, the validity and verifiability of miracles has been under consistent attack, much to the detriment of many honest seekers after God.

Geivett and Habermas have done an invaluable service to both Christians and honest seekers in search of the reality of God. They have collected, and contributed to, a series of outstanding essays dealing with the issues raised by religious liberals and philosophers against miracles. They address what they consider fundamental questions concerning miracles. These are questions concerning whether it is reasonable to think miracles have occurred, and the role that miracles might play in supporting religious beliefs.

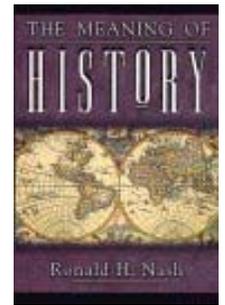
The organization of the book is wonderfully balanced. Francis Beckwith examines whether miracles are historically verifiable. A wonderful section by Winfried Corduan on establishing criteria for differentiating between miracles and unusual events was of special interest to me. J.P. Moreland deals with the charge that science has eliminated the need for God. Case studies are also offered concerning other religions, biblical prophecy and finally the seminal miracle of the resurrection. The conclusion of this outstanding series of articles is that it is most reasonable to maintain that God has acted in evidential ways in history.

I consider this book a must read for anyone desiring to engage our naturalistically biased culture with the truth claims of the gospel. It provides background and a wealth of resources for answering the charge that Christianity, with its outdated belief in the miraculous, has been superseded by the knowledge derived from science. The preaching of the gospel presupposes a God who creates the universe and then intervenes in human history in discernable ways. This book is an important resource in proclaiming that the miraculous resurrection of Jesus really happened and is the basis for our hope.

The Meaning of History

Ronald H. Nash
Broadman/Holman, 1998

Reviewer: Dave Ouellette



Most people think of history as a purely factual and scientific endeavor. However, there is another aspect of history which most people do not consider: the meaning of history, or what is called the philosophy of history. In this book, Nash discusses these two quite different approaches to history.

Nash states, "The difference ... is similar to the familiar distinction between seeing some trees and seeing a forest; the philosopher of history attempts to see the larger picture." He then focuses on human speculation about the meaning, purpose, and pattern of history, from the period of the ancient Greeks, through the twentieth-century. As a Christian, he attempts to answer the following question: "Since I am a Christian, what does my faith teach about the meaning, purpose and pattern of history, and how does that teaching differ from the opinions of famous thinkers of the past?"

Nash points out how worldview-thinking influences the way people approach the philosophy of history. He states: "People committed to different worldviews typically find it difficult to appreciate the perspectives that shape the thinking and conduct of others." As for the Christian worldview, Nash states many people mistakenly think of Christian theism as a collection of unrelated beliefs and claims. Using six clusters of beliefs about God, he explains, "Once people understand that both Christian theism and other religious and philosophical systems in the world of ideas are worldviews, they will be in a better position to judge the strength and weaknesses of the total Christian system.

Throughout the book Nash describes how the philosophy of history has changed within cultures as well as with the primary individuals who wrote on this subject such as Kant, Hegel and Marx. Although the book was published in 1998 and is only 183 pages long, it provides the reader with very broad and well written overview describing the key events and individuals that shaped the way we view the meaning of history today. After reading it, you will come away, as I did, with different perspective, and a deeper understanding in the study of history.

RTB Launching “Roots for Reasons”

God is continuing to bless the Reasons to Believe Ministry and the doors for expanded outreach stand wide open. A good example of this is the recent conference at Willow Creek Community Church. About 3,200 people attended Dr. Ross' Friday night presentation and over 400 people attended the Saturday apologetics training session. And, because of the conference, more radio shows are contacting RTB for interviews, more groups want RTB speakers, other churches want to host similar conferences, and on and on.

It's encouraging to see the growth of the Reasons to Believe Ministry. More importantly, it's exciting to see the lives being changed. Hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't contact RTB to tell them how the ministry played a key role in helping them—or a spouse, child, or friend—overcome their objections to the Bible and lead them to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, this success also has a downside. As the demand for the ministry grows, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the current scholar team (Hugh Ross, Fuz Rana and Ken Samples) to meet all the needs. In fact, RTB is being forced into the unfortunate position of having to turn down outreach opportunities due to the lack of scholar time and availability.



Therefore, after months of prayerful planning, the RTB leadership has decided that the growth of the scholar team is vital to the ministry. This is the focus of the “Roots for Reasons” they are launching. The goal is to build an adequate financial foundation (roots) to fund the addition of two new scholars. What will it take to accomplish this

goal? RTB wants to raise \$400,000 a year for 5 years in new funds (i.e., over and above current donations and revenues). This will cover the scholars' salaries and benefits, as well as the equipment, support staff and other things they will need to be effective. Why five years? That is the time it normally takes for a scholar to become self-supporting.

Scholars help further the Great Commission through personal outreach efforts—writing, researching, speaking, mentoring, training—touching thousands, even millions of lives each year. Thus, the addition of each new scholar multiplies exponentially the depth and breath of RTB's effectiveness in leading people to Christ. By hiring two new scholars now, RTB will be able to take advantage of the opportunities that are growing daily as the result of new scientific discoveries, increased RTB chapter activity, and the increased exposure of the ministry. Imagine the difference two new scholars will make!

Please give prayerful consideration to this vital effort. Through the generosity of an RTB supporter, a \$1 million matching fund has been established so every gift to “Roots” will be doubled. If you would like to make a one-time donation, send it to Reasons to Believe “Roots,” P.O. Box 5978, Pasadena, CA 91117. For more information, or to set-up a monthly giving plan, please contact Esther Attebery at RTB, 800-482-7836 or eattebery@reasons.org. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Reasons to Believe Ministry. Together we can truly make a difference in impacting the world with compelling reasons for faith in Jesus Christ.

Apologetic TOOLS

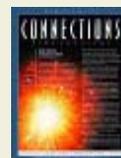
[Creation Webcast](#)

Join Hugh Ross each Tuesday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (PT), for an exciting discussion about how the latest scientific discoveries provide powerful evidence for the God of the Bible. Listen live through the RTB website. You can also listen to and download past episodes from the website.



[Free Newsletter](#)

RTB's newsletters are full of great articles on science and the Bible. They also provide updates on what's happening at the ministry. To subscribe, go to the RTB website and register. Once registered you can search and print past issues by clicking on the newsletter icon.



[Message of the Month](#)

Get fresh, faith-building messages each month while providing vital financial support to the RTB ministry.



This year's series is titled, “Adam: Miracle, Myth or Monkey?” Available on audio tape or CD. To learn more about the program, contact the chapter for a free tape or CD. Or, go to the RTB website and click on the M.O.M. icon.

[New Tract-Like Brochures](#)

RTB has introduced four new brochures for evangelism and initiating science and the Bible discussions. Topics include: How Did Life Emerge, What the Big Bang Says about God and Design, Is the Universe Designed for Humanity, and How Long Were the Creation Days. \$3 for a pack of 20 (one kind or 5 of each). Order at 1-800-482-7836.



[RTB Training Course](#)

Take RTB's Science and Evangelism Correspondence Course and become an official RTB apologist. The course retails for \$350 but is available through the chapter for \$150. Course materials include audiotapes or CDs, two videos (VHS or DVD) and seven books. For more information, contact the Seattle chapter. Scholarships are available from the chapter.



Initially, this sounds impressive. However, we need to be careful not to put too much weight on our interpretations of what “good” means. It was God who saw the creation as good, and just as His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8), so His judgment of “good” might be different as well.⁴ Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of events that seem bad from our perspective, yet when we begin to understand God’s purpose behind these events, we can see His wisdom and goodness in them.⁵

The Hebrew word for “good,” like the English word, has many different meanings and nothing in the text specifies what God meant by “very good.” Therefore, all that can be said with complete confidence is God gave the creation His approval. It was “very good” for achieving His goals, especially His goals for mankind—allowing rational, morally free agents to come into existence and make free choices to love and obey God and be in relationship with him.⁶ Animal death in no way conflicts with that goal.

Some find it difficult to see animal death as something God would call “good.” This stems from a misunderstanding of the role of death in God’s creation. Since God is the Creator, He has the prerogative of creating certain things for limited use.⁷ A healthy ecological system depends on a continuing cycle of life and death. Also many things that are important for human life—coal, oil, limestone, topsoil to name but a few—come from the death and decay of organisms.⁸ While young-earth creationists understand “good” to mean there was no animal death, in reality animal death plays a “good” and essential role in the world God created.

“Animal Death is Inconsistent with God’s Character”

This argument focuses on God’s kind and loving nature. Young-earth creationists claim a loving God would not create a world that included animal death because animal death is cruel and not loving. Henry Morris puts it this way:

One of the hardest things to understand is how anyone who claims to believe in a God of love can also believe in the geological ages, with their supposed record of billions of years of suffering and death before sin came into the world. This seems clearly to make God a God of waste and cruelty rather than a God of wisdom and power and love.⁹

This argument appeals to many because we like to think of God only as the God of love. However, God’s character is multifaceted and complex. He is going to throw plagues against the earth, eventually burn it up in judgment, and ultimately sentence the unrepentant to eternal torment. Animal death is certainly no less loving than these things.¹⁰ Again, God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8); so it is presumptuous to say that we can know what a loving God will do.

Numerous verses of Scripture tell us God provides food for the carnivores of the Earth, thereby condoning the death of some animals

for the survival of others (e.g., Psalm 104:21, 29-30; Job 38:39-41, 39:27-30). Thus, if one argues animal death is not loving, then one must admit, according to the Bible, that God is responsible for animal death and not loving.¹¹ Clearly this is not the case. Therefore, since God provides food for the carnivores of the Earth, we must conclude animal death—at least carnivorous activity—is a blessing from the hand of a loving Creator.

Some young-earth creationists cite Ezekiel 33:11—*God takes no pleasure in death and suffering*—to support this argument.¹² However, it is important to not take scripture out of context. The message of this passage is that God does not enjoy death and suffering, but death and suffering have a purpose (in this instance to get Israel to abandon its evil ways). Thus, rather than ruling out animal death, Ezekiel 33:11 helps put it in perspective—we need to trust God’s love and know it has a purpose.

“Death Before Sin Violates the Biblical Doctrine of Death”

This argument focuses on three statements of Scripture: Romans 5:12—*death entered the world through sin*, Romans 6:23—*the wages of sin is death*, and 1 Corinthians 15:26—*the last enemy to be destroyed is death*. Young-earth creationists claim these passages indicate all death (human and animal) is the result of Adam and Eve’s sin. For example, regarding Romans 5:12, Henry Morris states:

The animals, not having moral natures, were not guilty of sin, of course, but they also shared in the Curse, for they were—like Adam—made of the dust of the ground that God had cursed. ...Henceforth, “death reigned ... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Thus there is death in the world only because there is sin in the world.¹³

Regarding Romans 6:23, Ken Ham states:

As soon as Christians allow for death, suffering and disease before Adam’s sin ... they’ve raised a serious question about their Gospel message. What, then, has sin done to the world? According to Christian teaching, death is the penalty for sin.¹⁴

And regarding 1 Corinthians 15:26, Ken Ham states:

The Bible makes it obvious that death is the penalty for our sin. In other words, it is really our fault that the world is the way it is. ... Paul describes death as the “last enemy.” And that’s the point—death is an enemy—it’s an intrusion. The death of man and the animals was not part of the original creation.¹⁵

However, the issue being dealt with in these passages is clearly human death. Romans 5:12 states death came to *all men* as a result of sin. Both Romans 6:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-26 speak of spiritual redemption and this limits the meaning to *human* death. If these passages are interpreted more widely, Christ’s redemptive purpose would need to extend to the animal kingdom, which is implausible.¹⁶

Thus, while these passages support the view that human death (physical and spiritual) is the result of sin, they do not support the view that all death is the result of sin.

It is also important to examine what the Bible says happened at the Fall. The reality is that God judged *only* those who committed sin (Genesis 3:14-19). The serpent (Satan) would crawl on his belly and be bruised on the head by the seed of the woman. Eve was judged by having more pain in childbirth. Adam was judged by having to work harder for his food (i.e., cursed is the ground *because of you*). There were no other judgments made by God since all the guilty parties were punished.¹⁷ God does not punish the innocent. Therefore, since animals do not have the moral capacity to sin, their death cannot have arisen because they sinned.

Animal death before the Fall is really not a theological problem. Adam and Eve were not immortal by nature—eternal life was only available to them through the supernatural “tree of life.” If they were not immortal, then it must be true, *a fortiori*, that the animals were not immortal either. Unlike Adam and Eve, however, the animals did not have access to the “tree of life” and had no way to avoid death.¹⁸ Also, consider God’s warning to Adam in Genesis 2:17. Unless Adam understood the concept of death, there was hardly any point in telling him the consequence of disobedience would be death. Only animal death would have provided Adam an adequate example of what “death” meant.¹⁹

“Humans and Animals Were Vegetarians Before the Fall”

This argument focuses on God’s provision of green plants for food in Genesis 1:29-30. Young-earth creationists claim this passage proves the animals were vegetarians before the Fall and, if there was no carnivorous activity, there was little possibility of animal death. For example, James Stambaugh states:

[Those who accept animal death before the Fall] must believe that God intended man and animals to be carnivorous, even though God’s words are very clear (Genesis 1:29). He must, in all reality, call God a liar; he must say that God did not mean what He said. If humans and animals were vegetarian, then the possibility of animal death becomes remote.²⁰

However, it is important to examine God’s statements in Genesis 1:29-30. To man He says, “*They [plants] will be yours for food*” (1:29), while to the animals He says, “*I give every green plant for food*” (1:30). The fact these statements are different suggests God had something different in mind for man and the animals. The first statement seems to be an instruction limiting what man could eat (the plants will be your food). However, the second statement appears to be one of provision—it allowed a vegetarian diet for the animals but did not require it. Young-earth creationists assume God’s statement, “I give every plant for food” really means “I give only

plants for food” but this is an unjustifiable assumption.²¹

One reason we believe man was initially restricted to a vegetarian diet is because, after the Flood, God told man the eating of meat was now permitted in addition to the plants they were given earlier (Genesis 9:3). However, if God’s statement to the animals was an instruction to only eat plants, the decree was never lifted. There is no verse in the Bible stating the animals could, at some point, start eating meat.²² If carnivorous activity began at the Fall, it must be one of the better kept secrets of the Bible—nowhere is it stated in Scripture. Nor does Scripture tell us God warned Adam about the new dangers he would face in a post-Fall world where docile herbivores had changed to aggressive carnivores.

The Bible also makes it clear Adam named the animals. This is important for an understanding of what Adam had seen prior to the Fall. If the animals were docile herbivores, we would expect their names to reflect this fact. However, this is not the case for many carnivores. For example, the name “lion” is derived from the Hebrew root that means “in the sense of violence.” Likewise, the name “eagle” comes from the Hebrew root that means “to lacerate.” Thus, it seems abundantly clear that Adam had seen the carnivores in action, hunting and eating other animals.²³

“The Original Creation Did Not Include Death and Decay”

This argument focuses on several statements in Romans 8:20-22: “*the creation was subjected to frustration,*” “*the whole creation has been groaning,*” and “*the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay.*” Young-earth creationists claim this passage indicates the original creation was perfect but the creation changed at the Fall to include death and decay. For example, James Stambaugh states:

... the non-human creation has been subjected to the frustration of not being able to properly fulfill the purpose of its existence. The entire creation experienced the same fate that man did when he fell. ... God was to be glorified by the smooth running of nature. ... Therefore, if death prohibits the smooth running of nature, then death must not have been a part of God’s original plan.²⁴

Young-earth creationists maintain there have been two physical existences on earth. Before the Fall, heaven literally existed on earth—there was no death and all the physical laws were different than today. Then, at the Fall, the creation changed from a supernatural place to an earthly one that included death and decay. This they say is the “frustration” and “bondage to decay” Paul speaks of in Romans 8. However, while Romans 8 tells us when the bondage to decay will end (when the children of God are glorified), it does not tell us when it began or what the nature of the bondage is.²⁵ Therefore, there is no way to demonstrate Romans 8 refers to a changed creation or to the introduction of death and decay.

The Bible gives no indication the world of Adam and Eve was different than ours. For example, Psalm 102:25-26 says: “*In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them, and they will be discarded.*” Only if the psalmist is glossing over a change in the physical nature of the creation—a change of enormous proportions—could these verses be taken to agree with the young-earth view. In fact, the Bible tells us the creation was by nature earthly and not heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47) and that it is not God’s intended final result (1 Corinthians 15:50).²⁶

Not all Bible scholars believe Romans 8 speaks of the physical creation. Some believe “the corruption to which the earth is enslaved and will be delivered” is the earth’s present service as a mass graveyard of the dead. They suggest Paul’s vivid metaphor of the creation’s groaning is drawn from Isaiah 24-26—an apocalyptic picture of the earth as a graveyard awaiting the resurrection of the dead. Isaiah states “the earth mourns” because it has been made to “cover her slain.”²⁷ Whether this is true is a matter of interpretation. However, it does seem to fit the context of Romans 8 that speaks of the earth being set free from bondage when the children of God are glorified.

“*The Restored Creation is a Picture of the Original Creation*”

This argument focuses on prophetic scripture, usually Isaiah 11:6-9, that speaks of a future time when “*the wolf will dwell with the lamb.*” Young-earth creationists claim this passage speaks of the “restored creation” and, because it contains no animal death, the original (pre-Fall) creation must not have included animal death. For example, Ken Ham states:

The world will one day be *restored* (Acts 3:21) to a state in which, once again, there will be no violence and death. According to Isaiah 11:6–9, wolves and lambs, leopards and goats, lions and calves, and snakes and children, will dwell together peacefully. Clearly, this future state reflects the paradise that was once lost, not some imaginary land that never existed.²⁸

However, Scripture is silent about an Edenic restoration. The restoration promised in Acts 3:21 is not of Eden but of Christ’s “restoring the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). This will not be a return to the pristine condition of Edenic innocence previous to the Fall, but a fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham—a rebirth of the nation he was promised.²⁹ The Bible also clearly states that the promise we are looking forward to is not a return to Eden but “a new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13). In fact, the Bible tells us God will destroy the earth and its elements (2 Peter 3:10) and the former things will not even be remembered (Isaiah 65:17).

Young-earth creationists maintain Isaiah 11:6-9 speaks of a perfect world where there will be no death. However, this ignores the other verses in Isaiah 11. Isaiah states He (the branch from stump of Jesse or Christ) will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked. Thus, there will be some death. This makes it extremely difficult to claim Isaiah 11 points to the restoration of a death-free creation. It is also useful to note that Isaiah 11:6-9 speaks of the peace “on all my holy mountain.” Some say the “holy mountain” is the entire earth. However, some believe this peace concerns the children of God and it will not prevail everywhere but only where the children of God are found.³⁰

It is also very possible that Isaiah is not even speaking about predator-prey relationships. Some theologians believe these verses speak figuratively of hostile nations living together peacefully with Israel. For example, Calvin believed it speaks allegorically of bloody and violent men, whose cruel and savage nature shall be subdued.³¹ The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* explains the picture of fierce and defenseless animals living together peacefully symbolizes the removal of all natural hostility and fear between men.³² However, regardless of whether Isaiah is taken literally or figuratively, it does not prove that was the way it was in Eden.³³

“*Death Before Sin Negates Christ’s Atonement*”

This argument focuses on Christ’s atonement for sin. Young earth creationists claim animal death before the Fall makes a mockery of the atonement because, if death is not the penalty for sin, Christ’s death was unnecessary and meaningless. For example, Ken Ham states:

Death and bloodshed before Adam sinned makes nonsense of the whole basis of the atonement. It would mean that death was not the penalty for sin, (since it existed for millions of years *before* sin), and therefore death could not be used to atone for sin. This would destroy the reason why Christ died and the meaning of the resurrection.³⁴

Of all the young-earth arguments, this is the most serious because it is on this basis they label the old-earth view heretical. Frankly, it is also the argument that is most difficult understand. The plan of salvation is for the deliverance of sinners from the bondage of sin and death (both physical and spiritual). *Only human beings are capable of sin, only human beings are subject to judgment and only human beings are offered the salvation Christ earned on the cross.* One can only wonder how animal death could interfere with this plan, a plan that existed before creation.

There are several difficulties with the young-earth view of the relationship between sin, death, and the atonement. First, although human death is linked with human sin, it moves beyond the clear teaching of the Bible to claim all death is the result of human sin. Second, since

animals are amoral creatures and incapable of sinning, they are not in need of a restoration of relationship with God. It is an unwarranted extrapolation, therefore, to extend the consequences of human sin to them.³⁵ Third, and most important, while it is true there is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood, Christ's blood, it does not follow that there could have been no bloodshed before sin.³⁶

It is very important to emphasize the crucial importance of Christ's death for human sin. Without it, we would have no hope of eternal life. However, animal death before the Fall does not diminish the significance of Christ's death because there was no need of atonement before there was sin. Therefore, to say there could have been no bloodshed before sin is to make the same exegetical error as made by those who claim there were no rainstorms or rainbows before the Genesis Flood.³⁷

CONCLUSION

Most Christians view the relationship between God's will and human decisions in one of two ways. Calvinists emphasize predestination and believe our behavior can never deviate from God's plan. Arminians/Wesleyans emphasize free will and believe our destiny depends on our decisions, although God has perfect foreknowledge of what those decisions will be. Central to both of these views, however, is the belief that God is omniscient (all-knowing). Therefore, while we may disagree on the details of Adam and Eve's decision to sin, most would agree the decision was not unexpected—either God predetermined it or He (at least) foreknew it.

This raises an interesting issue about the young-earth view of the creation. Young-earth creationists maintain the original creation was a heavenly paradise where man could have lived forever had Adam and Eve not sinned. But, at the Fall, God changed the character of the creation from eternal to transitory and introduced death and decay. This seems to imply Adam and Eve possessed a high degree of autonomy—even libertarian freedom over which God had no knowledge—because the Fall thwarted what God had intended. Some might reply that God wanted Adam and Eve to have a brief glimpse of the eternal but why if He knew the true nature of man? After all, Satan had chosen disobedience in heaven.

It seems much more reasonable to conclude that God designed the creation with the Fall in mind because the test they were given was about their relationship with God, not the physical environment. Thus, while the creation had not yet been corrupted by human sin, it operated according to the same laws of nature as it does today, although there was no human death because Adam and Eve were sustained by the "tree of life." This may conflict with

the picture some Christians have of Eden as a heavenly and idyllic place. However, if that image is correct, why were man and the animals given food to eat? Why did Adam have to take care of the Garden? And, why did Adam need Eve? It was God's presence that made Eden unique, not necessarily the physical characteristics of the Garden.

Before young-earth creationists label animal death before the Fall as a heretical belief, they need to be mindful of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:4, "*How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?*" In reality, we can state with certainty that mankind lost fellowship with God at the Fall and human death—both physical and spiritual—entered the creation. This is clearly stated in the Bible. However, to insist the physical laws governing the earth changed at the Fall can only be a matter of speculation. Once we go down that road, we move from Biblical doctrine to ideological dogma.

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The Seattle Chapter of Reasons to Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons to Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

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