



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

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY 2006

What's Happening?

Chapter Meeting

The chapter will meet Saturday, February 18, 9:00 to 10:30 AM at Calvin Presbyterian Church, 18826 3rd Avenue NW, Shoreline. Attorney and chapter member Seth Cooper will speak on the Dover Case and the legal issues around teaching creationism in schools. Hope to see you there!

Upcoming Events

The chapter will be sponsoring a booth at the Northwest Christian Education Conference at Overlake Christian Church, March 23-25. This is a great opportunity to equip teachers and homeschoolers. Stop by and see us!

Ankerberg Debate

This month, the John Ankerberg Show is airing a debate between Hugh Ross and Walt Kaiser (the old-earth view) and Ken Ham and Jason Lisle (the young-earth view). Each segment is available on-line after it is broadcast on TV at: www.ankerberg.com/TV/ankjasrm.html.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- In The News..... page 2
- Book Reviews..... page 3
- RTB Resources..... page 5
- Who We Are..... page 9

The Age of the Earth in Light of the Bible

TIM BOYLE

While many issues have divided the Christian Church, one issue that has been particularly divisive in the modern era is the age of the earth. Drawing wrong conclusions about the "who" and "why" of creation has grave implications, but mistaking the "when" of creation is of little consequence to one's salvation. It is of great importance evangelistically, however, and because it has been causing considerable discord within the Church, it is important to clarify this issue.

In this essay, we will consider the biblical texts that are applicable to this issue as well as the theological implications of the two main contenders—namely, young-earth creationists (YEC) who claim the creation is thousands of years old, and old-earth creationists (OEC) who believe God's Word and world point to an ancient creation. We will also refer to scientific evidences as they impinge upon this issue. Prior to examining the biblical references that throw light on this issue, however, we need to set forth a brief historical overview.



Michelangelo's Creation of the Sun and Moon

First, it is important to note that the kind of polemics we see happening in the present debate is of fairly recent origin—in fact, the last few decades. The assumption made by many who hold the YEC view is that OEC is a recent compromise to accommodate naturalistic science. This is not supported by the facts. The calendar-day interpretation of the Genesis creation days has never been the exclusive view of the Church at any point in history. Rather, there have always been Christian leaders, such as Origen, Augustine and Anselm, who held to interpretations other than calendar days. These "church fathers" wrote extensively on their views of the creation days and it appears many understood them as being something other than 24-hour days (though none had any reason to think in terms of millions of years).

Second, until the 20th century, no church denomination made the calendar-day view a test of orthodoxy. None of the major creeds, confessions or catechisms of the Church have included this belief as part of their formulation. What was important with respect to the creation was the doctrine of "creation ex nihilo"—the

fundamental teaching that the physical realm was created by God out of nothing that preexisted it. The timing of God's creation was of little importance and a variety of possible views was tolerated.

Third, it is important to note that the idea the earth was much older than a simplistic reading of Genesis 1 in English implies (namely about 6,000 years) was proposed by early scientists who were Christians. This was long before the advent of Darwinian evolution and so it was not an accommodation to that. The reason for the strong emotions that have attached themselves to this issue are derived (legitimately or not) from the secular challenge that Christians perceive from Darwinism's attempt to explain life without any reference to the Creator. This is a challenge to all who hold a Christian worldview, whether YEC or OEC.

Let's now look at the Biblical evidence.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

What does the Bible teach concerning the age of the earth? There are, of course, no specific teachings to the effect "the earth is x number of years old." We can only infer an understanding of this issue from what the Bible teaches concerning the creation. There are 20 significant passages of Scripture that deal with the creation (e.g., Genesis Chapter 2, Job 38-41, Proverbs 8, Psalm 104) and numerous isolated verses. One basic premise we will be working with is a proper interpretation of any biblical passage is one that is consistent with all of the other relevant passages in the Bible. Thus, a proper understanding of Genesis Chapter 1 is one that is consistent with all these creation-related teachings.

Likewise, it is important to look at the original languages the Scriptures were written in, as well as their historical and cultural background, to determine how best to interpret their meaning. Reading English translations can sometimes limit one's understanding of the issues involved. I will, of course, have to depend on what recognized Hebrew and Greek scholars say about how best to interpret specific words and phrases and there is not necessarily uniform agreement on such subjects. Nevertheless, such expert advice will at least give us an understanding as to what nuances are allowable within the context of the original languages.

Without a doubt, the most important issue along this line is the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "day" in English. According to Hebrew lexicons, "yom" has three literal definitions: (1) daylight hours, (2) a 24-hour day and, (3) an unspecified period of time, essentially equivalent to the English words, "epoch" and "age." (In fact, in biblical Hebrew, there was no other word besides "yom" that could mean an epoch.) Which of these three literal definitions was intended for the six "creation days" of Genesis 1? To determine that, we need to look at the context of its usage, along with the related issue of what the phrase "and there was evening and there was morning" means.

Everyone seems to agree that the first literal definition—daylight hours—is not what was intended. Some, of course, opt for a non-literal, symbolic meaning for "day." But, if we assume Moses intended the word to mean a literal period of time, which is it: 24 hours or an age?

At first glance, the accompanying phrase "and there was evening and there was

Continued on page 4

In the NEWS...

[Is ID Science?](#)

This article by Michael Behe, author of "Darwin's Black Box," analyzes Judge Jones's ruling that intelligent design is not based on science. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&program=D1%20Main%20Page%20-%20Article&id=3218&callingPage=discoMainPage>.

[Little Faith](#)

This Breakpoint article by T. M. Moore discusses the Jesus' statement that his disciples had "little faith" What does it mean and how can we overcome it? Go to: <http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=18013>.

[Augustine on Evil](#)

This article by Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason examines Augustine's answer to the problem of evil. Koukl suggests Augustine's approach is the most intellectually credible and emotionally satisfying solution to this issue. Go to: <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5124>

[On the Origins of Life](#)

This Discovery Institute article by David Berlinski reviews the progress of origin of life research. His conclusion? There is no evidence a natural origin of life is true. <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=3209&program=D1%20Main%20Page%20-%20Article&callingPage=discoMainPage>

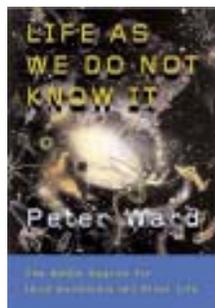
[Evangelical Activism](#)

This article by Chuck Colson discusses the recent ad campaign by the Evangelical Climate Initiative organization to stop global warming. Is this a prudent, biblical approach? Go to: <http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=18042>

Book Reviews

Life As We Do Not Know It

Peter D. Ward
Viking (Penguin Group), 2005
Reviewer: Jon Greene



Peter Ward, coauthor of *Rare Earth*, is a principal researcher at a NASA-funded astrobiology center at the University of Washington. In this book, Ward posits radical theories about extraterrestrial origins of earth-life and what other life forms might eventually be discovered in the solar system and beyond. The book deals with all aspects of panspermia.

Ward describes the Hadean Era on early earth, during which heavy meteoric bombardment caused temperatures sufficient to melt all surface rock and keep it in a molten state, conditions inhospitable to life. Ward comments that most scientists are confident that life on Earth had already arisen 3.8 to 3.9 billion years ago, about the time of heavy bombardment cessation. His major thesis is that earth-life originated elsewhere—possibly a “short RNA genome encapsulated in a virallike protein coating . . . [that] traveled piggyback on ejecta material” from Mars.

Life on earth is described as “CHON life,” comprised of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Ward goes on to name “earth life” as “Terroans”—earth (Latin *terra*) and life (Latin *oa*). Later he hypothesizes about theoretical life models, including RNA Life, Ammonia Life (“ammono life”), Acid Life, Silane Life (silicon-based), and Silicon-Clay Life. Ward devotes several chapters describing conditions on Mars, Mercury, Venus, Europa, and Titan, hypothesizing which of these life-forms might be suitable within such extreme conditions.

Even though RNA life is the “darling” of many in the origin-of-life research community, according to Ward, most planetary scientists reject the synthesis of organic molecules on the earth’s *surface*. Astrobiologists now propose the development of life in oceanic hydrothermal vents or the formation of protocells in high clouds of water vapor and “life fell from the sky to populate the oceans.” My sense is that astrobiologists will go to *any* extreme to avoid the “G-word,” since some theorized concepts seem more “make believe” than real.)

Having carefully read *Origins of Life* (Rana and Ross) the words of the late Richard Smalley ring clear, “Evolution had just been dealt its death blow . . . it is clear that evolution could not have occurred.”

Rose Publishing Pamphlets

www.rose-publishing.com

Reviewer: Mike Brown

Rose Publishing puts out some great posters and pamphlets. The fold-out pamphlets open out to twelve 8½” x 5½” pages. The one titled *Creation & Evolution* addresses astronomy, geology, paleontology, genetics, biochemistry, and mathematics. In the section on geology they give brief explanations of the young earth and old earth views, and mention Dr. Ross. For each subject they address:



1. What the Theory of Evolution Says
2. What Evolutionists Say We Ought to See
3. What We Actually Observe in Nature
4. What Scientists Say
5. Explanations Offered by Creationists

In *Answers to Evolution*, they give “16 reasons to Doubt Darwinism”. The questions for the most part are the ones addressed in Jonathon Wells’ book *Icons of Evolution*.

Both pamphlets are very professionally done and can be easily inserted in one’s Bible or school textbook. The charts are excellent for classrooms. My daughter has several of them in her classroom where she teaches apologetics at a Christian high school. Some of the other apologetic titles they offer include:

- Evidence for the Resurrection
- 100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus
- New Testament Archaeology and the Bible
- Old Testament Archaeology and the Bible
- Answers to The Da Vinci Code

Finding them at Christian Bookstores is a hit-and-miss proposition. They can be easily ordered online at the address above. They will send you a catalog of all their materials. They also have a few PowerPoint presentations, such as: *How We Got the Bible*, and *Religions and Cults*. These are great resources for adults and for working with kids.

morning” would seem to favor the 24-hour interpretation. Our modern concept of a day is the time period beginning at midnight and running to the following midnight. The Hebrews, however, considered the days of the week to begin at sunset and end the following sunset. Thus, they thought of the beginning of a day as evening, not midnight or morning. This is reflected in the order of “and there was evening and there was morning” (as opposed to “and there was morning and there was evening”). “Ereb” (evening) and “boqer” (morning) can also be translated as “sunset” and “sunrise” and thus can be understood as “beginning” and “ending.”

This Hebrew phrase is not found anywhere else in the Bible so other examples where “evening” or “morning” are used are not much help in properly interpreting this unique phrase. One possibility is this phrase was intended to communicate that each “day”, however long a time period that was, had a definite beginning and ending. Judging from the Hebrew concept of a solar day beginning at sunset and continuing until the following sunset, if a creation day was intended to be mean a 24-hour period, one would think Moses would have used the phrase “And there was evening and there was evening.” If taken in this sense, the days of Genesis would be just the nighttime period between sunset and sunrise—something no one seriously proposes. This, then, is one clue that the creation days are not intended to refer to ordinary calendar days.

Other indications in the text likewise point to the creation days being longer than 24-hours. For instance, Genesis 2:4 in the Hebrew uses the same word “yom” in the singular form to refer to the entire six “days”, which is clearly longer than a 24-hour day. Likewise, the seventh day on which God rested from his creative activity does not include the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning”—an indication something is different about this period of time. In fact, since the first six days all include this phrase, the implication is that the seventh day has not yet ended. God is still resting.

Hebrews 4:1-11 makes this clear when it describes the Sabbath-rest for God’s people. Beginning at verse 4, it states: “For somewhere [God] has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.” ...It still remains that some will enter that rest. ...There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest.” This clearly indicates God’s “seventh day” is still ongoing many thousands of years after he finished his six “creation days.”

This Sabbath-rest is not an all-inclusive but only from the work of creation. In other words, God is not creating new life forms—something that is supported by the fact that no new species of animals have been observed to come into existence since humanity has been on the earth. This interpretation is supported by Jesus’ words in John 5:16-18, where he defends healing someone on the Sabbath. He said, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” Thus, God is not resting from work in general, but only from his “creation work.” Since God’s seventh “day” of rest has continued for many thousands of years, this adds to the weight of the argument that the creation days of Genesis were similar long periods of time.

There are many other pieces of biblical evidence to support this conclusion, but let’s look at Genesis 2 which centers on the creation of mankind in the Garden of

Apologetic TOOLS

Creation Update Webcast

Join Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana each Tuesday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (PT), for webcast about how science agrees with the Bible. Listen live and/or download past broadcasts. Go to the RTB website and click on “Get Tuned In.”



Daily Discoveries

RTB posts a new scientific discovery on their website each day that supports the RTB creation model. You can also view past discoveries since 2003. For an archive of discoveries, go to the website and click on “Today’s New Reason.”



Ministry Newsletters

RTB’s free newsletters feature great articles on science and the Bible. They also keep you informed about what’s happening at the ministry. Go to the RTB website and click on “Free Magazine.” You can also view and print past issues.



Message of the Month

Receive a monthly CD featuring special discussions by the RTB scholars while supporting RTB financially. This year’s series is titled, “Adam: Miracle, Myth or Monkey?” Go to the RTB website, and click on “Donate.”



Outreach Brochures

Get RTB’s brochures for initiating science and the Bible discussions. Topics include the big bang, the origin of life, the anthropic principle and the “days” of Genesis. Go to the RTB webstore and click on “ministry items.”



Apologetics Training Course

Take RTB’s training course and become an official RTB apologist. Available through the chapter for \$200. Course materials include audiotapes or CDs, two videos (VHS or DVD) and seven books. Financial scholarships are available.



Eden. First, God “plants” a garden to put the newly formed Adam in and then he “made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground.” In principle, this could have been an instantaneous growth but it certainly implies a more lengthy process. After all, God put Adam into the garden “to work it and take care of it.”

Obviously, God wanted Adam to learn something from the experience of gardening; namely that “it is not good for the man to be alone.” Next, God brought the animals to Adam to name. In order to have any meaning, this process would need to include a careful examination of each animal to understand its characteristics so that it could be given an appropriate name. Neither Adam’s working the garden or his naming of the animals would have been activities that were logically designed to be completed in a few hours of one calendar day.

On top of this, God caused Adam to go into a deep sleep, endure an operation and recover from it to be presented with his newly created helpmate, Eve. Adam’s response, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” in the Hebrew has the nuance of “at long last” (and is translated that way in several English Bibles). If we require that this entire process had to be completed in just a few hours at the end of the sixth 24-hour creation day, it loses its meaning as a training exercise designed by God to prepare Adam and Eve for their roles in his creation. These and other clues make a compelling case for the creation days of Genesis being periods of time much longer than 24-hour calendar days.

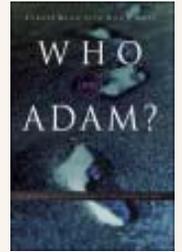
Of course, in itself, this would not require “millions of years.” In principle, these periods could be fairly short, perhaps months or years. Or, as several of the ancient church fathers suggested, they might be 1,000-year periods, based on the analogy that “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years” (2 Peter 3:8). However, if it were not for the fear that allowing long creation days would open the door to “millions of years of death and suffering before the Fall,” I am convinced that ordinary Christians looking carefully at what the Bible says would easily reach the conclusion that the creation days were not intended to be taken as 24-hour days.

COMMON OBJECTIONS

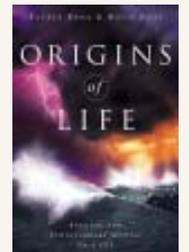
Perhaps the Scripture most commonly used to support the calendar-day interpretation is Exodus 20:11, where Moses is expounding on the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. Moses states, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Jesus tells us “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). It is part of our very nature to take time off from our work and when we abuse our bodies through overwork we pay a price. The principle being taught is we are to rest every seventh day just as God rested from his creative work on the seventh day. The pattern being established is one in seven. This same pattern is applied to agricultural land in Lev. 25:3-4, where the Lord commands the Israelites to work a particular field for six years

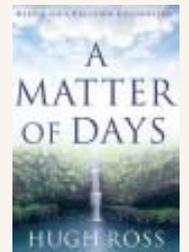
Was Adam an accident of nature? Are humans descending from primates? In this new breakthrough book, “*Who Was Adam?*” Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana examine the evidence that challenges these notions and points to a special, supernatural origin of mankind. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback, US\$ 12.95.*



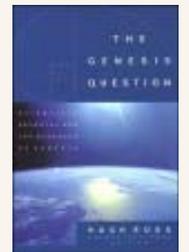
In *Origins of Life: Biblical and Evolutionary Models Face Off*, Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana reveal how life’s beginnings can be tested. They examine origin-of-life research and compare it to the biblical model, exploding the myth of a naturalistic origin of life. *Intermediate/Advanced, Hardback, US\$ 12.95.*



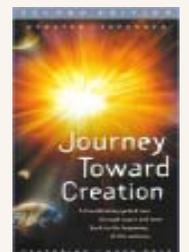
The length of time represented by the word “day” in the Genesis creation account is a source of controversy in the Christian church. In this new book, *A Matter of Days*, Hugh Ross explores how this controversy developed and addresses many of the key issues of the debate. *All Readers, Paperback, US\$*



Does the Bible teach the earth is 10,000 years old? How does science and the book of Genesis relate? In *The Genesis Question*, Hugh Ross examines these and other issues from an old-earth creationist perspective. A great book to share with Christians and skeptics alike. *All Readers, Paperback, \$US 9.95.*



Is life in the universe common or rare? What are the odds of finding other Earth-like planets? Take an amazing journey as Hugh Ross examines how the universe has been meticulously fine-tuned for human life using state-of-the-art computer animation. *All Viewers, VHS or DVD, \$US 19.95.*



RTB Webstore - <http://store.reasons.org>

and then give it a rest on the seventh. The appropriate time period for humans is one is seven days, but for the land it is one in seven years. Likewise, God's "day" of rest can be any period he chooses and the Bible indicates God's "Sabbath rest" is many thousands of years long.

In principle, God could have divided the time span he was preparing the earth for human life into any number of time periods. There is no phenomenon in nature that defines a seven-day week (as there is for day, month and year). Most people reading the Bible have simply assumed that the seven-day week was established because God had worked for six "days" (presumed to be of equal length) and rested on the seventh. It is my opinion that the evidence from both the Word and the world point to God ordaining the seven-day week as the ideal cycle for the way he created humankind, and then describing his creative activity in terms of being analogous to that.

Such an understanding is consistent with the biblical data and is also consistent with the data we have from the natural world. This view relieves one from the often awkward forced-fitting of the data that is required by assuming every period to be of equal length and non-overlapping. This means that while the creative activity described on each of the 6 creation days represents the main themes of that particular period, it doesn't mean that, for instance, all the land plants were created during the third period, with none being created during any of the other time periods.

Another common objection is the claim that long creation days imply death before sin, and thus undermine the gospel message. There are many facets to this issue, but briefly, the main reason this argument does not carry weight is the death that was introduced into the world upon Adam and Eve's sin was spiritual death, not physical death. This is clearly spelled out in Romans 5:12, where Paul states, "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." Only humans are created in the image of God, and thus only they are capable of sinning against God. It clearly implies the death being talked about applies only to humans—namely, spiritual death (eternal separation from God). The gospel message is that Christ's sacrifice of his human life provided the way for redemption from the curse of sin and the spiritual death of humans that accompanies it.

This says nothing about the physical death of animals and whether or not that was part of God's "good" created order. Claiming carnivorous activity is cruel and cannot be good is an appeal based on our human emotions and does not stand up to logic. First, let's look at the biblical support for this understanding. Among the many points I could raise, Psalm 104, a "creation psalm" paralleling Genesis 1, makes the strongest case.

Psalm 104 praises God for his initial good creation, in all its aspects. Beginning with verse 21, it speaks of God's creation of animals—both herbivorous and carnivorous. Verse 21 says, "The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God." Verses 27-28 say all of the animals, "... look to you [God] to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up: when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things." If carnivorous activity was not a part of God's original "good creation," why would the psalmist be praising God for it?

That this is a creation psalm is further testified to in verse 30, where, after describing the death of animals (even implying extinction), it says, "When you send your Spirit, they (animals) are created and you renew the face of the earth." The natural reading of this is animal death played a part in God's creative activity in preparing the earth for human occupation. It's also important to note that Adam named the animals and, in Hebrew, the name for "lion" is related to the word for "violence," apparently in reference to this particular animal's characteristics. This would certainly imply that Adam had observed "violent" carnivorous activity prior to the fall. Other Hebrew names for other carnivores have similar word relationships.

Carnivores and herbivores are designed by God to fulfill specific roles in the ecological balance. A certain amount of suffering may indeed be borne by animals that are killed and eaten by carnivores, but there would be far more suffering borne by herbivores if they were allowed to multiply unchecked, as they would eventually eat themselves "out of house and home." Thus, in effect, the carnivores provide a "service" that is necessary to maintain healthy, long-term populations.

Moreover, carnivores were not designed to eat vegetable matter as their sole source of nutrition. They can only exist for any length of time if their diet consists of concentrated nutrition. A T-Rex would not survive very long if it had to pick fruit and catch insects. Gulping down grass and leaves would not have been an option, as their digestive systems weren't designed to process such low nutrition food. And what would a shark have eaten? Kelp? Likewise, what would the purpose have been for the vast array of sophisticated camouflage mechanisms if there originally were no carnivorous activity?

The only solution to this dilemma would be to propose an ad hoc hypothesis that these life forms evolved these features very quickly after the Fall. Remember, if God did not create any new life forms after the sixth creation day, then natural processes are all that is left. And indeed, this is the mechanism YEC propose to explain how the "kinds" taken onto the Ark (with its limited space) diverged into the vast number of species that exist on the earth. For instance, one pair of "cat kind" taken onto the Ark is surmised to have been enough to explain lions, tigers, cheetahs and any

other type of cat.

The ironic fact is such an ad hoc scenario testifies to a belief in the power of natural process evolution that far surpasses any that atheistic evolutionists hold! If natural process evolution actually had the power to do such transformation in only hundreds of years, then I can understand why millions of years would be perceived as a threat! It might explain how a simple one-celled “ancestor” evolved into us without the need for a Creator. But in reality, evolution has no such power. It might be able to explain such things as bacteria developing resistance to antibiotics, but not where bacteria came from in the first place. More important, it cannot explain where we came from!

Death and decay are necessary parts of God’s creation, which he called good, and that is something that is not dependent our human sentimentality. It is guaranteed by the natural laws God created, under which the universe operates. The “second law of thermodynamics” governs heat flow, which is a necessary part of performing any kind of work and clearly this was in existence before the Fall. The laws of physics did not change when human sin entered the world.

Young-earth creationists maintain that death and decay—which is governed by the second law of thermodynamics—first came into existence at the Fall of mankind. However, according to Jeremiah 33:25, “the laws of heaven and earth” are fixed. The spiritual condition of sin does not change the physical laws God has ordained. It does, however, have a deleterious effect on how these unchanging laws play out in our lives. Genesis 3 indicates that because of the Fall, Adam’s previously enjoyable work became toil and Eve’s pain in childbirth greatly increased. Sin did not introduce these for the first time, it only increased the high level of discomfort associated with them.

It is clear God knew humans would abuse their freedom and fall into sin. This was part of God’s plan for the universe. After all, it was God who allowed Satan to come into the Garden to tempt Eve. Theologians and philosophers have for centuries debated the difficult problem of evil and suffering, and there are no easy answers, particularly when it comes to why a specific individual suffers unfairly. Nevertheless, we can have a general understanding of God’s overall purpose in allowing evil.

It was God’s will to create free moral agents and not preprogrammed robots that only follow Him out of necessity. It is not possible for an omnipotent God to create free moral agents without the possibility of their choosing to rebel. The freedom to love God and follow Him is also the freedom to rebel against Him. Thus, the purpose of this universe is two-fold. The first is to bring together physical life with spiritual life in the form of us human beings. The second is to conquer once and for all the problem of

evil without compromising the freedom of his creatures, without which obedience would be meaningless. One wonders if Adam and Eve would have lived in the Garden forever if they had chosen to resist Satan’s temptation and not sin. In His foreknowledge, God knew beforehand that first Eve and then Adam would succumb to temptation, and so this is a hypothetical question with no definitive answer. Nevertheless, the statement in Genesis 3:22 that man “must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever” certainly implies that in theory Adam and Eve could have physically lived forever there in the Garden. But the symbolism of the “tree of life” also implies that eternal physical life was not something that was inherent in Adam and Eve. In order for them to “live forever,” they would have to continue eating from that special “tree of life” that God provided. However, as that would not have served God’s purposes, they were instead banished from the Garden into a world where they had to work hard to “plant their own garden.”

GOD’S WORD AND WORLD

Earlier I stated that one basic premise we must work with is that interpretations of any biblical passage must be internally consistent with all other relevant biblical passages. Another basic premise we must work with is there must be a similar internal consistency between the truths revealed by God in his Word and the world he created.

Science, which is the human attempt to interpret what God reveals to us through the natural world, can error. Likewise, theology, which is the human attempt to interpret God’s Word, can error. But God’s Word and the facts we can observe in the world he created must logically be consistent with each other, since they have the same author. Thus, any apparent conflict between science and our interpretation of Scripture should indicate to us that our scientific understanding, our theological understanding, or both are in need of adjustment.

There are obviously major discrepancies between the YEC interpretation of Scripture and the “standard” interpretation of the record of nature by mainstream science. I don’t think anyone would disagree that major adjustments would be necessary to bring these two into alignment with each other. But where should this reappraisal come? It’s my conviction that both have major errors in need of correction.

Young-earth creationists are correct to point out that science is dominated by naturalistic philosophy that illegitimately limits what may be considered to materialistic causes alone. It needs to be pointed out, however, that this is a recent intrusion into the scientific enterprise, as the birth of modern science itself was dependent on the Christian worldview, and almost all of the early scientists were themselves dedicated Christians.

With the exception of those who held a biblical worldview, essentially everyone in the ancient world believed natural phenomena were governed by the whims of various gods and/or the result of events happening in the unseen spirit world. Such a worldview would certainly short-circuit any fledgling beginnings of science, since there would be no reason to assume any phenomenon in nature could be described by universal natural laws. Thus, the focus would be entirely on trying to influence the gods through various religious rituals and magical incantations. It was only as people began to realize that natural phenomena are governed by natural laws instituted by the Creator that modern science became possible.

The problem, as I see it, is not with ordinary “empirical science” (areas of science where direct observation and repeatable experiments are possible), but with “historical (or origins) science,” the study of past, unobservable, unrepeatable events. When studying the history of life—as any good “historian” should do—we should analyze the evidence we observe in the geological record, etc., with an open mind and come to tentative conclusions as to which possible scenario best explains all of the evidence.

If some sort of supernatural element is not rejected a priori, as is the case with Darwinism, then the obvious conclusion to draw from the evidence is that a supernatural Designer created the universe and fine-tuned it so that life would be possible. Likewise, the evidence leaves no room for any naturalistic scenario for the origin of life and the explosive radiation events such as the “Cambrian Explosion” where large numbers of new life forms show up all at once in the fossil record with no apparent ancestors. In fact, there is no compelling fossil evidence for any kind of macroevolution and so it is reasonable to conclude that God created all species through direct intervention.

All “creationists” agree that God created life, but there is disagreement as to when God created it (as well as the mechanism). As we’ve dealt with above, the biblical evidence allows for long “creation days” and indeed, in my opinion, the only consistent reading of the biblical evidence concerning the timing of creation requires that the “days” of Genesis be long periods of time. Of course, that in itself doesn’t yield billions or even millions of years, and until modern science gave us the tools to analyze the record of nature, few if any could conceive of the universe having been created billions of years ago. Materialists, even in ancient Greece, viewed the world as being eternal for philosophical reasons, since a universe having a beginning logically required a beginner—something that wasn’t compatible with their chosen worldview. But for the vast majority of people, the creation was assumed to be thousands or tens of thousands of years old.

What changed this view? The evidence from geology and the fossil record along with astronomy. Some, however, view this as allowing

science to dictate our interpretation of Scripture. While it is true that some Christians have allowed naturalistic philosophy masquerading as science to dictate the parameters they work with in interpreting the Bible, this need not be the case. The basic premise we work with is that all truth is God’s truth, and since God is responsible for both the words of the Bible and the facts of nature, when those are properly interpreted, they cannot be contradictory.

There are literally hundreds of independent lines of evidence that consistently point to an age for the earth of about 4.5 billion years (and about 13.7 billion for the universe). Likewise, each of the numerous “proofs” that the earth is only thousands of years that are trumpeted by young earth creationists has major flaws. Other works are available that detail these arguments. (For example, see www.godandscience.org/youngearth/yeclaims.html#he4.)

APPEARANCE OF AGE

When faced with the direct evidence for ages far in excess of the “biblical” age of the earth (as they interpret it), young-earth creationists typically resort to the “appearance of age” argument. They reason that just as God created Adam as an adult, he also created a “mature” earth that didn’t need time to develop. It only had the “appearance of age.” This argument, however, falls apart at close examination. Adam is not here for us to examine in order to confirm whether God gave him at his creation any signs of wear and tear on his body commensurate with a 20 year-old body. We do, however, have the record of nature to examine as a reality check on the “appearance of age” argument.

As an example of the kind of direct evidence for age (as opposed to inferred age from more indirect means), we can directly count tree rings to see how long a particular tree had been growing when it died. For instance, with the Bristlecone Pine trees of California and Nevada, we can directly count annual tree rings back some 9,000 years. According to the YEC model, this would mean they were growing for many centuries prior to Noah’s flood, which would have wiped them out if it were truly global and only about 5,000 years ago.

Numerous other time indicators have been studied that testify to ages far in excess of the 6,000 to 10,000 years of earth history portrayed in YEC writings. One particularly strong piece of evidence is in the banding of coral as it grows. What is unique about coral is that it not only records an annual layer, but it also records within that annual layer 365 micro-thin daily layers. According to the YEC model, coral of any age should always have essentially the same number of daily bands per annual band.

Careful consideration of the implications of this and countless other age indicators demand one of two possibilities. Either they

are real or they have been artificially superimposed to merely give the “appearance of age.” We can measure the earth’s present spin-down rate at between 1.5 and 2 milliseconds per day per century. In 6,000 years, that would only amount to a difference of about 0.12 seconds if the rate were constant. Of course, “we weren’t there centuries ago to measure it”, and so if it’s necessary to rescue their model, young-earth creationists can always claim (ad hoc again) that the slow down rate was much higher.

Why is this an issue? Because ancient fossilized corals have been found with as many as 410 daily bands within each yearly band (with correspondingly fewer daily bands per yearly band in strata higher up in the geologic column). That would correspond to a day being only about 21 hours 22 minutes long. This ancient coral is from what has been labeled the Devonian era, a period that various independent dating methods determine to be approximately 360 to 410 million years ago.

This is in very good agreement with what would be expected if the present spin down rate has remained essentially constant during that time period. Since the moon is slowly spiraling away from the earth, the spin down rate would have been somewhat higher in the early part of that period, but other than that minor effect, there simply is no mechanism to explain any previous rapid spin down that could explain such huge differences in the length of a day so that the YEC model could account for this evidence.

Are we to suppose that the Creator planted this “pseudo-evidence” to give things an “appearance of age” in order to “test our faith?” Such a concept is utterly foreign to the God revealed in Scripture. The God of the Bible is a totally trustworthy being whose very nature is truth and who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Yet that is the unintended consequence of proposing that God gives his creation a false “appearance of age.”

Light from distant stars and galaxies have travel times far in excess of 6,000 years, and light from even the nearest star takes more than 4 years to reach earth. Thus, young earth creationists have proposed that God created light from stars in transit so that the first humans could see them from the very beginning. But this means that even today, when we see an event such as an exploding star that is farther away than 6,000 light-years, it is only an illusion. We’re not seeing a real event since the light produced by the real event wouldn’t have reached us yet.

Of course, adherents to YEC can still claim that God wouldn’t be deceptive by creating the light photons in route so that we would see what we would have seen if the light had time to reach us normally. There are, however, travel distance effects that indicate whether the light has really traveled that distance, and so God’s creating photons to make them appear to have really traveled that distance would be deceptive. In theory, a creator could do

such a thing, but it would not be consistent with the attributes of the God revealed in the Bible.

One other point should be made about the appearance of age argument. Those who claim this as a way of explaining away the evidences in nature indicating great age also, for the most part, appeal to various evidences from nature they claim point to a young age for the earth. There is a glaring slip in logic here, as you can’t have it both ways. If God truly gave his creation an appearance of age that doesn’t correspond to its true age, then it would logically follow that there should not be valid evidences for a young earth. Likewise, if the evidences from the natural world truly point to a young earth, then the earth wasn’t created with an appearance of age. You can’t have your cake and eat it too.

The Bible tells us that God speaks truthfully through his creation. Romans 1:18-20 tells us, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Likewise, Psalm 19:1-4 tells us: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

These Scriptures and many others make it plain that God is not deceptive in what he shows us through the record of his creation. Giving his creation an “appearance of age” that hides something’s true age simply would not be consistent with the attributes of God as revealed in the Scriptures. God has left his “fingerprints” throughout his creation so that careful analysis on our part yields true information about his creative acts—including their timing.

There is a similar dynamic going on among atheistic evolutionists as we see in the “appearance of age” arguments of the YEC. It is termed “appearance of design”, and while the proponents of this argument are at polar extremes from young-earth creationists, the reasoning is actually very similar.

For instance, biologist Richard Dawkins opens his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, with the comment that “biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose.” The equally atheistic Sir Francis Crick warns in his autobiography that “biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.” I could paraphrase Crick’s sentence to make it applicable to YEC

by saying, "Bible believing Christians must constantly keep in mind that what they see is not old, but rather young." Both camps reject the obvious conclusion that an unbiased examination of the evidence yields because it doesn't fit into their preconceived framework of reality. In other words, they do not follow the evidence wherever it may lead.

It is my conviction that an unbiased and consistent appraisal of both the biblical evidence as well as the evidence from the world God created point to God's direct and personal involvement in the process of creation during the entire time it has taken place. Young-earth creationists would no doubt agree with that statement but would say that God tells them in the Bible that the history of humanity is only very slightly (less than 6 days) younger than that of the universe.

This, however, contradicts the evidence God has left in his creation, and, in my opinion, is not consistent with the biblical evidence either. If I am in error at any point in this evaluation, I am open to correction, and I challenge my young-earth creationists brothers and sisters in Christ to likewise reevaluate their understandings of this issue. There simply is no good reason to allow the discord that exists in the church today over this issue to continue to "poison the well" and be a hindrance to our common goal of bringing Christ and his salvation to a lost world. We all need to do a reality check on our understandings of both God's Word and His World. As the Bible tells us, we should "Test everything. Hold on to the good." (1Thes. 5:21)

Tim Boyle is a missionary living in Tsukuba Science City, the science and technology center of Japan. He is a trained RTB apologist and holds a BS in physics and MDiv and Dmin degrees in theology. He can be contacted at za3t-byl@asahi-net.or.jp.



Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

Who Are We?

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.

It is our conviction that the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.