



SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER


"THE HEAVENS DECLARE
THE GLORY OF GOD"
PSALM 19:1

What's Happening?

As the year progresses, we hope to bring you new opportunities to learn more about the Reasons To Believe Ministry and get involved in the local chapter. Our next chapter event is tentatively scheduled for April or May. We'll keep you posted about the date, location and topic.

For those who want to grow in the area of apologetics, we encourage you to take a look at RTB's educational programs. Through Reasons Academy, you can take the "Good Science, Good Faith" program, a high school level science apologetics course. For those wanting more advanced training, Reasons Institute offers college level courses. Topics include Creation and the Bible, Creation vs. Evolution, Astronomy and Design, World Religions and Biblical Archaeology. Check them out!

Reasons To Believe is at the forefront of trying to reach unbelievers by using science to remove the obstacles to faith in Jesus Christ. Over the past years we have sponsored many outreach events and we plan to continue that effort. The harvest is great, but the workers are few. We ask you to think prayerfully about how you might contribute to our local ministry.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments. Contact us at seattle@reasons.org or via our facebook page,  RTB Puget Sound.

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Journey of Biblical Creation—How I Came to Believe in an Old Creation

By Lawrence Dol

Some 26 years ago I was convinced that God created all of this universe in 144 contiguous hours. Now, today, I am equally convinced that it is most likely that he took about 14 billion years to create this universe. This is the story of how (and some of the why) my thinking has changed over the intervening time.

Intellectual Tension

As a new believer I was taught that all of creation was accomplished in six days, which I simply accepted since that is what the Bible seemed to say quite clearly and as a new Christian I had no reason to contest that interpretation. To my young mind it made little difference and there was certainly no difficulty for God to create everything in six days, or for that matter, six hours or six microseconds; he just spoke and things were, it seemed to me that the only reason to suppose creation didn't happen with the speed of thought was that the Bible indicated it took six days. I occasionally wondered, as did some of the early church Fathers, why creation took God any appreciable time at all.



My classes through to high-school level did not really touch on cosmic or biological origins, perhaps because I attended private Catholic schools, or perhaps because those years were concerned with the basic and practical foundations of science education and were far less colored by philosophical biases than seems common today. However, all my life I maintained a general interest in the sciences (even though as a self-taught programmer my career path took a practical commercial direction and I never did pursue a computer science degree). As a result, over the years I had the distinct and growing impression that the more scientists discovered about the universe in which we lived, the more the Bible was being shown to be inaccurate.

At times, the only reason I held on to my faith was because I had, on several occasions, personally and directly encountered God; I had experienced the presence of God and to a degree that trumps all other considerations. But that only deferred the inevitable for me—to be true to myself, eventually I had to be able reconcile the

observable reality of the universe in which we live with that which the Bible teaches. For me it is critical that my faith be intellectually honest, for surely if God created all that we behold it must in the end make sense. Not only that, but the Christian God is a personal God who created persons in his image—it seemed to be nonsensical that he would want us to put a significant aspect of our personal being “on hold” to follow him. Finally, the Christian scriptures teach us to “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3: 15)—part of that, I think, is defending the scriptures themselves as logical, wise and the source of ultimate truth.

Cognitive Dissonance

As a result of this internal conflict, I tended to gravitate towards science texts which sought to frame scientific discoveries in the context of a Biblical recent creation model. As I was led to understand it, the only way to reconcile the Bible with science was to assume that much of science is flawed, either in the data or the conclusions derived from that data. Essentially, that our observations of the cosmos are misleading and/or that there exists a nearly universal conspiracy on the part of the scientific community pushing an atheistic agenda.

However my satisfaction with this explanation of why mainstream science is discordant with scripture was tenuous at best. In truth I was growing continuously more concerned that science was systematically and progressively disproving scripture. The growing discord between what seemed to be true in my heart and what seemed to be true in my head created an ever-growing internal stress, which challenged my core beliefs. Even allowing for mistakes being made in the fields of science, I felt I was being pressed toward an uncomfortably gnostic philosophy, that is, that real truth is revealed and what is observed is not to be trusted - that there is no such thing as an objective reality.

Such arguments did little to ultimately assuage my concerns as they seemed to depend on flawed presuppositions. They only go so far and in the final analysis are insufficient to explain all (or even most) of the discrepancies between scientific observations and a young-creation interpretation of the Christian scriptures. While it's possible that scientists might be mistaken about some things, even a lot of things, there are many observations that are made that indicate an ancient cosmos - it seemed unlikely for all of these to be completely incorrect. And what disturbed me most was the ongoing trend of *mounting* evidence for an old universe. One test for the likely validity of a theory is whether the accumulating evidence is trending toward making the theory stronger rather than weaker.

At this stage of my development of thought, I had not made the distinction between the ideas of an ancient creation and those of evolution and had therefore not yet realized that the former did not automatically require the latter. In my thinking the two things were conflated; so adding to my intellectual distress was the implication that mankind is merely a highly evolved animal, an idea which stands in direct conflict with the scriptural teaching that mankind is created in the image of God, endowed with intrinsic value and superior to the animals, on which premise the entire gospel seems to rest. Truly, at this point, my understanding of scripture and my understanding of this universe were in serious cognitive dissonance.

Bible & Science In the News

■ Mars Soils Show No Evidence of Water

This RTB article by Jeff Zweerink discusses the findings of NASA's Phoenix Mars Lander which performed detailed measurements on the distribution of particle sizes in Martian soil. The findings limit the amount of water that existed on Mars and seem to rule out the possibility of microbial life. Go to www.reasons.org/article/mars-soils-show-no-evidence-of-water.

■ The First Seven Days

This *tothesource* article discusses John Lennox's new book which is designed to help Christians understand the relationship between Genesis and science. For Lennox, what science is telling us affirms Scripture and both the evidence from science and Scripture lead him to reject the young-earth view. Go to: www.tothesource/1_25_2012/1_25_2012.htm.

■ Eyeballing Design

This *Salvo Magazine* article by Casey Luskin discusses how biomimetics (the study of the structure/function of biological systems as models for design) has powerful implications that point to intelligent design. One example he discusses is the design of the human eye. Go to www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo19/19luskin.php.

■ Growth of Christianity

Christianity is said to be on the decline. This *tothesource* discusses a recent Pew Research Center survey that shows that Christianity is in fact one of the world's fastest growing faiths. While it has declined in Europe, the growth in the rest of the world more than offsets that decline. Go to www.tothesource.org/1_11_2012/1_11_2012.htm

■ Gandalf on Mars

This *Salvo Magazine* article discusses the DNA and RNA systems in the cell that encode and decode information which the author refers to as a Gandalf system. He contends that neo-Darwinian mechanisms cannot be the source of such systems because such coding requires intelligence. Go to: www.salvomag.com/new/articles/salvo15/15stevens.php.

Intellectual Harmony

One of the characteristics peculiar of the young-creation position, at least as I experienced it, is a generally defensive posture which seems to invariably pervade nearly any discourse or debate. For me, it was a constant feeling of making an argument from a position of weakness—always being “on the back foot”, so to speak. It’s also been my experience that a certain unwarranted vehemence or passion is fairly typical in the tenor of most young-creation advocates. For myself, that characteristic undertone was borne of the fact that I believed that everything of eternal value hinged on the Bible being right and science being wrong. Over time, this made me extremely uncomfortable—it seemed to me that God’s truth should not be so easily threatened by simple observation of what he had created. I was never shown an alternative in which both were right (science essentially and scripture absolutely).

I was also uncomfortable with what seemed to be a reluctance to follow the evidence, taking instead a stance that felt more like an infantry man defending a strategic hill at all costs without any idea what is so important about the hill in the first place.

In 2006, after some two decades of wrestling with this conflict, I read *Genesis and the Big Bang* by Gerald Schroeder. This was the first work that I had encountered which approached the Biblical creation from a perspective of reconciling scientific observations with scriptural revelation. As a scholar of the Hebrew language and holding a doctorate degree in physics, Schroeder writes with considerable credibility on both science and theology.

What impressed me most were the conclusions about the cosmos which Hebrew scholars reached solely from reading the biblical text. While I am not sure I agree with everything that the ancient Jewish mystics say about the scriptures, it’s clear that they read well beyond the surface of the text and arrived at accurate conclusions about the cosmos which were more than a millennium ahead of western scientific endeavors.

Furthermore, Schroeder’s points pertaining to the Hebrew language deepened my understanding and appreciation of scripture, particularly the fact that the deeper meaning and nuances of words in Hebrew is often lost upon translation into English. I began to see that the “plain” meaning of the Hebrew scriptures can be anything but *plain* in an English translation; the text of scripture is much deeper to the Jewish mind than to the mind of a modern, western English reader. His thoughts on the phrase “there was evening and there was morning” were particularly profound to me:

The Hebrew word for “evening” is *erev*. This is the literal meaning of the word, although the root of *erev* carries with it implications far beyond that of a setting Sun. What is the visual sensation for evening? Darkness begins. Objects become obscure, blurred. The root of *erev* means just that, “mixed up, stirred together, disorderly.” The Hebrew for “morning” is

boker. Its meaning is quite the opposite of *erev*. Morning brings first light. Objects, visually mingled by the dark of night, become distinct entities and this is the root meaning of *boker*, “discernable, able to be distinguished, orderly”.

Had the text said, “and there was morning and there was evening,” our concept of a day might have been better satisfied. The sequence would have at least included the light of the day. But had the text followed this human logic, it would have forfeited its cosmic message. [...] We are being told, that within this parcel of space where mankind was to stake his first roots, there was a systematic flow from disorder – chaos or “evening” – to order or “morning”.

This was my first encounter with an exposition of the Genesis creation account that extolled a literal reading of the Hebrew text and yet understood it as pertaining to a vast amount of time. It gave me the scriptural “permission” I needed to consider that God may have created over a time period other than six solar days. There were no contortions of interpretation, only a better understanding of an ancient language for which the nuances are all but lost on modern readers from another culture using a language with vastly more precise semantics. For the first time it was exposed to an understanding of the Genesis creation account which was not diametrically opposed to the general body of scientific discovery.

I went on to read the remainder of Schroeder’s books, but about that time my quest in this area was interrupted by a far more pressing assault on my entire belief system, exacerbated in no small part by this intellectual conflict. The aftermath of this assault forced me, by God’s grace, to largely reconstruct my understanding of God, the church and what it means to be human. This season in my life lasted several years, during which time I revisited Schroeder’s books from time to time.

It was at the end of 2009 some three and a half years later that I came across Hugh Ross’ book *More Than a Theory* and David Snoke’s book *Biblical Case for an Old Earth* which marked the resumption of my quest to find a way to address the conflict I saw between science and scripture. Ross, in particular, exposed me to a perspective that not only harmonized the Christian scriptures with empirical scientific observations (flawed though those observations sometimes are), but to my amazement actually seemed more consistent within the body of scripture in and of itself and also harmonized better with my recent new understanding of the character and nature of God.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for me is straight from scripture. In the letter to the Romans we learn that not only is what can be known about God “plain” and “clearly perceived” from his creation, but that all men are held eternally accountable for how they receive this evidence (and, it seems, that is quite apart from the spoken gospel):

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them,

because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:19-23, ESV)

I can find no way, without compromising intellectual integrity, to interpret this passage as saying anything other than that the creation, in and of itself, is sufficient for (a) knowing God, and (b) accountability to eternal judgment.

Quite incidentally, the old-creation explanation of the cosmos and its purpose harmonizes directly with some key principles of faith which I had come to believe entirely independently as a result of my faith-struggles over the immediately preceding years. It also comports far better with my understanding of key doctrines such as the Incarnation and the Trinity.

I have come to realize that the entire body of evidence at my disposal, the evidence from scripture, historic Christian teaching, the character and nature of God and the evidence from science, is *best* explained by a creation which is very old. It now seems to me that the truth God has revealed in his creation is in complete concordance with the truth he has revealed in scripture. Now, finally, my intellect is at peace with my spirit and my ongoing journey of knowing God holds great promise and excitement for the wonders yet to be discovered.

Lawrence Dol is a software engineer currently employed as Director of Software Engineering in Kirkland, Washington. He holds a Certificate in Computer Programming from the Central Institute of Technology in New Zealand, and a Certificate in Christian Ministries from Harvest Bible College in Australia. This and other articles can be found on his website at www.SoftwareMonkey.org.



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 and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, God's 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 and the Bible.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of RTB.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, to expose them to God's word.

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.

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