



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

What's Happening?

Mark Your Calendar

Join us Saturday, June 9th for our next chapter presentation, "World View, Truth and the Feeling of Certainty"

Time: 9-11 AM, free continental breakfast from 8:30 to 9.

Place: Fellowship Hall, Highlands Community Church, Renton, <http://highlandsc.org/#/services/renton-campus>.

RSVP: Please let us know if you plan to attend the breakfast by emailing echolk4@yahoo.com

Learn what a world view is, why it is important and how you can help equip students with a proper faith and science world view. We'll also discuss the many resources RTB has available to help you in this important effort.

Reasons To Believe is at the forefront of trying to reach unbelievers by using science to remove the obstacles to faith in Jesus Christ. The harvest is great, but the workers are few. We ask you to think prayerfully about how you might contribute to RTB and get involved in the local ministry.

We welcome your questions and comments. Contact us at seattle@reasons.org or visit our facebook page,  RTB Seattle Area Chapter.

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When Beliefs Become Blinders (Part 3 of 4)

By Greg Moore

This article critiques, "Systematic Theology Texts and the Age of the Earth," by young-earth creationist Terry Mortenson. In Part 1 and 2, we examined the issue of pre-Fall animal death. Here we examine Mortenson's second line of reasoning against old-earth creationism.

GOD'S CHARACTER

Mortenson goes to considerable lengths to show that the old-earth view is contrary to God's nature. He opens with:

Closely related to this issue of [animal] death is the incompatibility of the idea of millions of years with the character of God, as revealed in Scripture.⁶⁰

Again, he builds his case on two propositions: (1) God did not require long time periods to create, and (2) long creation days insult God's character.

God Did Not Require Long Time Periods to Create

Mortenson argues that God would not take millions of years to create because his miracles take effect immediately. He states:

The events of creation in Genesis 1 were clearly miraculous. God spoke and things immediately came into existence, as both Genesis 1 and Psalm 33:6-9 state. The emphatic repetition of "and it was so" and "God saw that it was good" and "there was evening and there was morning, the Xth day" strongly indicate this in Genesis 1.⁶¹

There is no doubt that God's creative acts were miraculous. However, to say that all of the events were instantaneous goes beyond the biblical text. Let's examine the three statements Mortenson points to in Genesis 1.

"And it was so" does not mean the events were achieved immediately.⁶² The Hebrew word translated "so" (kēn) merely expresses that they were fulfilled.⁶³ The statement "God saw it was good" signifies that God completed the activities of that "day" and was pleased with his work. "Evening and morning" is an idiomatic expression that is nonliteral and simply indicates that the events of that "day" were concluded before the start of the next "day."⁶⁴ So, none of these statements restricts the duration of God's creative acts. They merely indicate that God's creative commands



were completed.

What about Psalm 33:6-9? This passage speaks of God creating the heavens and gathering the seas. The statement Mortenson refers is found in verse 9—“for he [God] spoke and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast.” Mortenson focuses on the first half of the statement. However, the parallel use of “spoke” and “commanded” clarifies the meaning. The point is that God’s commands are an expression of his will and they are effective because he makes them so.⁶⁵ It is a testament to God’s omnipotence, not a commentary on the timeframe of these creative acts.

Mortenson continues:

Also, it is difficult to imagine how God could say “let there be light” and then have to wait millions of years for light to appear. Similarly, Adam surely did not sleep for days, weeks, months, years or millions of years while God made Eve.⁶⁶

This misrepresents the old-earth view. Old-earth creationists do not claim that all of the events of Genesis 1 involved long time periods. Rather, what they contend is that some of God’s creative acts were instantaneous and some involved creative processes that were completed over time. Let me clarify what is meant by this.

Old-earth creationism is a broad term that includes theistic evolution. That is not the view advocated here. By “old-earth” I refer to the day-age view of Genesis 1 where God’s creative acts are real, historical and miraculous, with the six creative “days” representing periods of indefinite length. And, when I say “creative processes” I am speaking of divine activity, not naturalistic mechanisms. So, the only thing that distinguishes these events from God’s other creative miracles is their duration.

The need for instantaneous miracles does not come from the Bible, but from the young-earth model. Obviously, if the creation was completed in six 24-hour periods, God’s creative commands had to be fulfilled immediately. However, the ancient Hebrews did not think of an action as past, present or future, but simply as complete (perfect) or not complete (imperfect). As a result, verbs in biblical Hebrew only indicate the state of an action, not the duration.⁶⁷ So, all we can determine from the text that God’s creative commands were completed, not how long God took to achieve them.

We see the same thing as we examine the word meanings of the Hebrew verbs in the creative commands. “Let” or “let there be” (hayah) means to cause to be done.⁶⁸ “Sprout” (dasha) means to produce vegetation.⁶⁹ “Bring forth” or “brought forth” (yatsa) means to cause to come out.⁷⁰ “Made” (asah) connotes the fashioning or development of an object.⁷¹ “Create” (bara) emphasizes the initiating of something brand new.⁷² None of these word meanings require that the creative acts were instantaneous. Even bara which is often associated with creation ex nihilo (creation from nothing) can describe a creative process that took time to complete.

There is another factor that must be considered when studying Genesis. The original Hebrew text of Genesis 1 is a continuous statement that does not have the breaks and verse divisions found in modern translations. In Hebrew narrative, the time interval between actions in successive sentences is often not specified. As a result, there are time intervals of unknown length between the six creative “days.” How much time elapsed cannot be determined from the text—it could have been seconds or millions of years. So, this is an additional problem for those who demand that Genesis 1 was completed in the span of 144 hours (six 24-hour days).⁷³

Mortenson continues:

Bible & Science In the News

■ Climate Change: Cool Clouds

Climate scientists are attempting to improve the ability of global climate models (GCMs) to predict the future climate. This RTB article by Dr. Kevin Birdwell discusses how current models don’t accurately account for cloud cover which plays an important role regulating the Earth’s temperature. Go to www.reasons.org/articles/articles/climate-change-cool-clouds.

■ Are We Born Believers?

This *tothesource* article discusses a new book titled “Born Believers” by Dr. Justin Barrett that argues that the latest research concludes that the belief in God arises naturally from something within children. This contradicts the evolutionary view that belief in God is unnatural and something foisted upon children. Go to www.tothesource.org/5_2_2012/5_2_2012.htm.

■ Pikaia Fossils & Evolutionary Paradigm

The *Pikaia*, an ancient worm-like organism, is believed to be a common ancestor to all vertebrates (chordates). This article by RTB’s Fuz Rana, discusses recent findings that show the *Pikaia* appeared at the same time as advanced chordates, thus casting doubt on the evolutionary model. Go to www.reasons.org/articles/pikaia-fossils-explode-the-evolutionary-paradigm.

■ Human Evolution & Common Ancestry

This Discovery Institute article examines the evidence for human/ape common ancestry, providing links to scholarly relevant to the debate. As the author points out, the functional morphological and genetic similarities between humans and apes is explained equally well by common design (by a Creator) or common descent. Go to www.discovery.org/a/19001.

■ Jesus Survey

This *tothesource* article examines the findings of a recent survey of Christian teenager’s beliefs. Shockingly, what the survey reveals is the vast majority of teens have persistent doubts, or even outright disbelief, in what the Bible says about Jesus. According to the author, this is a wake-up call for parents, educators and pastors. Go to www.tothesource.org/5_23_2012/5_23_2012.htm

It is also clear in Genesis 1 that God supernaturally created the first plants, sea creatures, birds, land animals and the first human couple because the description of those events is stated in a way that contrasts with the description of how other such creatures would come into existence after the original ones—that is, by the natural growth of seeds in the fruit of the first plants or by the sexual reproduction of the first animal and human pairs.⁷⁴

Old-earth creationists do not debate the fact that plants, sea creatures and birds, land animals and man were supernatural creations. Again, the issue is whether they were instantaneous events. Let's examine what Genesis 1 tells us about these creative acts.

The Bible tells us God said "let the land spout (dasha) vegetation" and "the earth brought forth (yatsa) vegetation (v. 11-12). Dasha conveys the idea of vegetation sprouting from seed and maturing into plants. So, these statements imply that God employed a creative process. God spoke the command; then vegetation sprouted and grew into mature plants. How much time this took cannot be determined from the text, but the Hebrew word meanings do not suggest it occurred immediately. All we know is that it was completed on that creative "day."

In verse 21, we are told God created (bara) the sea creatures and birds. This emphasizes that they were brand new organisms and perhaps ex nihilo (made from nothing). However, the text does state whether God created sea creatures and birds simultaneously or sequentially. So, it could have been a single event or two separate events separated by time. The text also does not specify how God created all of the different species of sea creatures or birds. So, God could have been made all of the species at one time or through a series of miracles over the course of that "day." Therefore, we simply can't say with certainty how much time was involved in the creation of the sea creatures and birds.

In verse 24-25, we see the creation of the land creatures. God says "let the earth bring forth (yatsa) living creatures after their kind" and we are told that God made (asah) the beasts, cattle and creeping things. The fact the biblical author chose to asah rather than bara tells us there is something different about this event. Asah emphasizes the fashioning of an object, while bara emphasizes the newness of an object.⁷⁵ Many old-earth creationists take this to mean that God made the various land animals from a common body plan.

Like the sea creatures and birds, it is not entirely clear how land animals appeared on the earth. The text does not specify whether the "kinds" were created simultaneously or whether all of the different species of each "kind" appeared at once. So, it is possible that God created all of the land animals at one time, or that he populated the earth with new creatures over the course of that "day." We simply can't say with certainty how God did it or how long it took from the text.

In verse 27, God creates (bara) man, male and female—again emphasizing that they were brand new creatures. There is no doubt that God spoke and they appeared as fully-formed,

mature adults on the earth. However, as we read Genesis 2 we see that considerable time passed between the creation of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 2:15 tells us that Adam was placed in the Garden to cultivate and maintain it. In verse 18, God decides to make a helper for him. This implies that Adam had performed his activities long enough to feel a certain lonesomeness and dissatisfaction. God responds in verse 20 by assigning Adam the task of naming the birds and land animals—a lengthy exercise after which he felt a renewed sense of loneliness. Finally, in verse 22, God creates Eve. We do know how long all of this took, but the text suggests that was likely weeks, months or even years.⁷⁶

Therefore, as we examine the Hebrew text it is apparent that Genesis 1 does not tell us how fast God performed his creative work.⁷⁷ The Hebrew word meanings suggest some of the creative acts were instantaneous miracles, but they do not require that everything was accomplished in a blink of the eye. This is true whether we approach the text from a young-earth or old-earth perspective.

Mortenson continues:

These facts support the conclusion that all the other divine acts in Genesis 1 were essentially instantaneous or occurred in a miraculously short period of time, on the respective days they occurred. Conversely, there is nothing in the text that indicates that thousands or millions of years would have been required for God to accomplish His objective in each act of creation.⁷⁸

Obviously, God did not "require" thousands or millions of years to perform his creative work. However, the issue is not what God is capable of, but what Scripture teaches.

The primary message of Genesis 1 is theological. The purpose is to reject the pagan cosmologies of the ancient world by revealing the one true God who created all things from nothing and brought forth his creation in an orderly and systematic manner.⁷⁹ It does make statements about the physical and biological development of the earth, but they are subsidiary to the theological message and an incomplete description of what transpired.⁸⁰ So, many of the precise details, like the timeframe of God's creative work, are simply not stated.

And elsewhere Mortenson states:

His [Jesus'] miracles also confirm the young-earth view. From His first miracle of turning water into wine ... to all His other miracles, His spoken word brought an immediate, instantaneous result, just as God's word did in Creation Week. ... Also, the nature of all God's later miracles in the Bible and the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels were instantaneous.⁸²

The purpose of Jesus' miracles was to provide evidence for his deity and validate his truth claims. This required that his miracles produce immediate results to demonstrate his power over nature, demons, disease and death to the people that observed them. Since there were no human witnesses to the events of Genesis 1, it really doesn't matter how were

performed. The evidence that they were miraculous comes from the testimony of God's Word and the revelation from what has been made (Romans 1:19)—neither of which demands that God's acts were instantaneous.

Mortenson's claim that all of God's later miracles were instantaneous is contrary to Scripture. Consider, for example, the Flood of Noah and the virgin birth. Both transcended natural laws, both would not have occurred without God's supernatural intervention and both occurred in real time. However, even if that claim was true, it doesn't prove that is how God chose to create.

The next article, which will appear in the July newsletter, will discuss the claim that long creation days insult God's character.

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ENDNOTES

60. Mortenson, "Systematic Theology..." 179.
61. Ibid.
62. Whitefield, "Genesis One and the Age of the Earth," 24.
63. Harris, Archer, Waltke, Theological Workbook of the Old Testament, 434.
64. Dr. Otto J. Helweg, "How Long an Evening and Morning," http://www.leaderu.com/offices/o_helweg/eve-morn.html; Whitefield, "Genesis One and the Age of the Earth."
65. Harris, Archer, Waltke, 55.
66. Mortenson, 179.
67. Whitefield, "Genesis One and the Age of the Earth," 13.
68. Ibid., 213.
69. Ibid., 199.
70. Ibid., 393.
71. Ibid., 701.
72. Harris, Archer, Waltke, 127.
73. Whitefield, "Genesis One and the Age of the Earth," 16-17.
74. Mortenson, "Systematic Theology..." 179.
75. Harris, Archer, Waltke, Theological Workbook of the Old Testament, 127.
76. Gleason Archer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 59-60.
77. Archer, Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties, 60.
78. Mortenson, "Systematic Theology..." 179.
79. Archer, 60.
80. Whitefield, "Genesis One and the Age of the Earth," 34.
81. Mortenson, "Systematic Theology..." 177.
82. Ibid., 179.



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.