

Chapter 15: Creation

Why, how, and when did God create the universe?

Definition: *God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself.*

A) God created the universe out of nothing (262)

1) Biblical evidence for creation out of nothing

- a) Before God began to create the universe, nothing else existed except God Himself (He created the universe *ex nihilo*). (Gen 1:1, Psa 33:6, Psa 33:9, Joh 1:3, Col 1:16, Rev 4:11, Heb 11:3)
- b) Because God created the entire universe out of nothing there is no matter in the universe that is eternal. (Psa 90:2)
- c) The fact that God created the universe out of nothing means that it has meaning and purpose.

2) The creation of the spiritual universe (264)

- a) The creation of the entire universe includes the creation of an unseen, spiritual realm of existence. (Rev 10:6, Neh 9:6)
- b) The New Testament explicitly affirms the creation of the spiritual realm. (Col 1:16)

3) The direct creation of Adam and Eve (265) (Gen 2:7, Gen 2:21-22)

- a) These texts are so explicit that it would be very difficult for someone to hold to the complete truthfulness of Scripture and still hold that human beings are the result of a long evolutionary process. (Gen 2:7)
- b) Even more impossible to reconcile with an evolutionary view is the fact that this narrative clearly portrays Eve as having no female parent: she was created directly from Adam's rib while Adam slept. The very first female human being would have been descended from some nearly human creature.
- c) We are created in God's image, the pinnacle of God's creation, more like God than any other creature, appointed to rule over the rest of creation.
- d) The Scriptural perspective gives us the human significance that God intended us to have.

4) The creation of time (266)

- a) God created time (the succession of moments one after another) and existed before it. (Job 36:26, Rev 1:8)
- b) This reminds us of his lordship over it and our obligation to use it for his glory.

5) The work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in creation. (266)

- a) God the Father was the primary agent in initiating the act of creation.
- a) The Son is the active agent carrying out the plans and directions of the Father. (Joh 1:3, Col 1:16)
- b) The Holy Spirit is generally pictured as completing, filling, and giving life to God's creation.
- c) (רוּחַ refers to "spirit," or "breath," or "wind," which even translated as such seems to be a figurative reference to the Holy Spirit). (Gen 1:2 Job 33:4)
- d) The work of the Holy Spirit is brought into much greater prominence in connection with the inspiring of the authors of Scripture and the applying of Christ's redemptive work to the people of God.

B) Creation is distinct from God yet always dependent upon God. (267)

1. God is *transcendent*, far "above" creation in the sense that he is greater than creation and independent of it. (Eph 4:6)
2. God *immanent*, very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent upon him for its existence and functioning. (Job 12:10, Act 17:25, Heb 1:3)
3. This is distinct from materialism, which would say that the material universe is all there is.
 - Christians today who focus almost the entire effort of their lives on earning more money and acquiring more possessions become "practical materialists" in their activity, since their lives would not be much different if they did not believe in God at all.

4. The Scriptural account of God's relation to his creation is also different from pantheism, which says that the whole universe is God or is part of God.
 - a) God has no distinct personality.
 - b) God changes with the universe.
 - c) God is no longer holy because of evil in the universe.
 - d) The importance of individual human personalities is lost in the goal of blending with the universe.
 5. The Scriptural account also rules out *dualism*, that God and the universe have eternally existed side by side.
 - a) Dualism indicates an eternal conflict with God and the material universe, denies God's ultimate Lordship over creation, denies that the universe was created inherently good, and encourages the view that material reality is somewhat evil in itself.
 - b) Example: *Star Wars* movies, where a universal "Force" has both good and evil sides.
 6. The Scriptural account rules out *deism*, that God created the universe but is not now directly involved in it (though some deists hold that God will ultimately judge the universe).
 - a) This view affirms God's transcendence, though it denies biblical history.
 - b) Many "lukewarm" or nominal Christians are, in effect, practical atheists, since they live lives almost totally devoid of genuine prayer, worship, fear of God, or moment-by-moment trust in God to care for needs that arise.
- C) God created the universe to show His glory. (271)
1. God's entire creation is intended to testify of His greatness. (Isa 43:7, Psa 19:1-2, Rev 4:11)
 2. Creation shows God's great power and wisdom, far above anything that could be imagined by any creature. (Jer 10:12, Jer 10:16)
 3. God did not need to create the universe—it was a totally free act of God. (Rev 4:11)
 4. God created the universe to take delight in his creation, especially to the extent that it shows forth various aspects of His character.
 5. This explains human creativity (art, music, or literary skills, etc.). We enjoy imitating, in a creaturely way, His creative work.
- D) The universe God created was "very good." (272)
1. If God created the universe to show his glory, we would expect that the universe would fulfill its purpose.
 2. At the end of each stage of creation, God saw that what he had done was "good" (Gen 1:4, Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25.)
 3. At the end of the six days of creation, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).
 4. Even though sin is now in the world, the material creation is still good in God's sight and should be seen as "good" by us as well. (1Ti 4:4-5)
 5. This frees us from false asceticism that sees the use and enjoyment of the material creation as wrong. (1Ti 4:1-3)
 6. Though the material creation can be misused, we must not let the danger of abusing God's creation keep us from positive, thankful, joyful use of it. (1Ti 6:9-10, 1Ti 6:17-18)
- E) The relationship between Scripture and the findings of modern science. (273)
1. Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict* (1975): When all the facts are rightly understood, there will be "no final conflict" between Scripture and natural science. (274)
 - a) Schaeffer thought there was room for disagreement among Christians who believe in the total truthfulness of Scripture:
 - i. There is a possibility that God created a "grown-up" universe.
 - ii. There is a possibility of a break between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 or between 1:2 and 1:3.
 - iii. There is a possibility of a long day in Genesis 1.
 - iv. There is a possibility that the flood affected the geological data.

- v. The use of the word “kinds” in Genesis 1 may be quite broad.
 - vi. There is a possibility of the death of animals before the fall.
 - vii. Where the Hebrew word בָּרָא (*bara'-to create, shape, form*), is not used there is the possibility of sequence from previously existing things.
- b) We should not fear to investigate scientifically the facts of the created world but should do so eagerly and with complete honesty, confident that when facts are rightly understood, they will always turn out to be consistent with God’s inerrant words in Scripture.
- c) Objection: The Bible is only for teaching religious and ethical truth, not scientific truths.
- Answer: The whole Bible is the words of God, and he can speak to us about whatever he wants.
2. Some theories about creation seem clearly inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture. (275)
- a) **Secular theories** (275): any theory of the origin of the universe that does not see an infinite God as responsible for creating the universe by intelligent design (e.g., “big bang” in secular form without God, or when Darwinian evolution is thought of in a totally materialistic sense).
- b) **Theistic evolution** (275): The theory that God guided the process of evolution proposed by Darwin, though God created matter in the beginning, created life in its simplest form, and created man.

Objections:

- i. The randomness of evolutionary theory is incompatible with Scriptural teaching on the purposefulness of God’s work. (Gen 1:24)
 - ii. The driving force of all evolutionary themes is *randomness*. (276) (Gen 1:21, 25)
 - iii. If God intervened in the evolutionary process, guiding it at points, we no longer have evolution at all (no longer random mutation).
 - a. God’s creative word brings immediate response. (277) (Psa 33:6, 33:9; Gen. 1:11)
 - iv. God made plants and animals to reproduce “according to their kinds” (Gen. 1:11, 24), suggesting that God created many different types of plants and animals. (277)
 - v. God’s role is present and active in creating or forming every living thing, a fact hard to reconcile with the kind of oversight of evolution proposed by theistic evolution. (277) (Psa 139:13, Exo 4:11, Mat 6:30, Psa 104:21)
 - vi. The special creation of Adam, and Eve from him (Gen. 1-2). (278)
 - a. Adam and Eve possessed highly developed linguistic, moral, and spiritual abilities from the moment they were created.
 - b. The New Testament clearly understands Adam and Eve to be historical figures (cf. Luke 3:38, Acts 17:26, 1Cor. 11:8-9, 2Cor 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).
 - vii. There are many scientific problems with evolutionary theories. (279)
 - a. Those who claim to be forced to believe in evolution because the “scientific facts” leave no other option have simply not considered the data on the other side.
 - b. Since the Scriptural record argues convincingly against it, it does not seem to be a valid theory for a Christian to adopt.
 - c. According to Louis Berkhof “theistic evolution is really a child of embarrassment, which calls God in at periodic intervals to help nature over the chasms that yawn at her feet. It is neither the biblical doctrine of creation, nor a consistent theory of evolution.” (Louis Berkhof, ST pp. 139-140).
- c) Notes on the Darwinian theory of evolution (279). What do we mean by “evolution”?
- Micro-Evolution**—small development within one species (e.g., development of immunities, colors and varieties of roses, taller humans, etc.)

Macro-Evolution—“nonliving substance gave rise to the first living material, which subsequently reproduced and diversified to produce all extinct and extant organisms” (Wayne Frair and Percival Davis, *A Case for Creation* [Norcross, Ga.: CRS Books, 1983], p. 25).

I. Current challenges to evolution (280). Darwinian Evolution—life began when a mix of chemicals present on earth spontaneously produced a very simple, probably one-celled, life form. This living cell reproduced itself, and eventually there were some mutations or differences in the new cells produced, leading to the development of more complex life forms. A hostile environment meant many would die, but those best suited to their environment survived (natural selection).

Phillip E. Johnson in *Darwin on Trial*:

- a) The amount of variation produced in 100 years of research is extremely limited (dogs are still dogs, fruit flies are still fruit flies, etc.) (280)
- b) Almost any characteristic of any living animal can be said to give it some "advantage" in surviving (with imagination). Therefore what "natural selection" really means is that the animals that survive are those that survive. (A tautology, but not a persuasive argument to support a theory). In practice, those that "survive" through generations are those that have the greatest number of offspring. This proves nothing about mutations. (280)
- c) Vast and complex mutations required to produce complex organs (e.g., an eye or bird's wing) could not have occurred in tiny mutations accumulating over thousands of generations, because the individual parts of the organ are useless (give no "advantage") unless the entire organ is functioning. (281)
 - i. The mathematical probability of such random mutations happening in one random mutation is effectively zero.
 - ii. Darwinists are left saying that it must have happened because it happened.
 - iii. E.g., the Bombardier Beetle.
- d) The fossil record does not reflect intermediate species, not in Darwin's day nor in 130 years of subsequent intensive archeological activity. (282) (Again, it comes to "It must have happened because it did happen" for Darwinists.)
- e) Molecular structures do show relationships, but Darwinists assume that relationships imply common ancestry, a claim certainly not proven. (In fact, common elements seem better explained by a common designer.) (283)
- f) Evolution cannot explain how any life could have begun from a random mixing of chemicals. (284)
 - i. Johnson: "That a living organism emerged by chance from a pre-biotic soup is about as likely as that a "tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein." Chance assembly is just a naturalistic way of saying 'miracle.'" (Johnson, p. 40, quoting Fred Hoyle.)
 - ii. In billions of years and thousands of miles in distance, even with generous masses of proteins covering the earth, the statistical possibility of enzymes being formed and identical enzymes finding each other so new copies could be produced is 10 to the 340,000,000th power—that is, one chance in 10 with 340 million zeros after it! (281)
 - iii. Darwinian evolution is *not* an established fact.
 - iv. Life created in a test tube also would not prove evolution, just that life takes intelligent design to create!
 - v. The uncertainty of evolution has created many novel positions (e.g., Francis Crick, Nobel Prize winner for discovering the structure of DNA molecules, offered the "Directed Panspermia" theory: life may have been sent here by a spaceship from a distant planet!).

II. The Destructive influences of evolutionary theory in modern thought (286)

- a) If man is the product of random occurrences in the universe, no real significance for human life. With no creator, there is no Judge to hold us morally accountable.
- b) If natural selection brings improvement in life forms, should we hinder this process by caring for those who are weak or less able to defend themselves?
- c) (why not war to destroy those who are inferior? Marx, Nietzsche, Hitler use this kind of argument)
- d) If humans evolve for the better, the wisdom of earlier generations (particularly religious beliefs) is not likely as valuable as modern thought, negatively impacting the trustworthiness of Scripture.
- e) If we are just a higher form of animal, then we should not kill animals (for food, for leather) or use them in scientific/ medical research (radical animal rights groups)

The Age of the Earth

1) some preliminary considerations. (289)

- This is an issue over which Bible-believing Christians differ.
 - There is a danger of spending too much time arguing over the age of the earth and neglect to focus on the much more important and much clearer aspects of the overall teaching of the Bible on creation.
 - 2 Options: 1) “Old earth” (consensus with modern science dating the earth at 4,500,000,000 years old) and 2) “Young earth” dating the earth at 10,000 to 20,000 years.
- i) There are gaps in the genealogies of the Bible (e.g., Matthew 1:8-9 omits three generations of the same genealogy listed in 1 Chronicles 3:10-12). (290)
 - ii) The age of the human race: man existed by 10,000 B.C., as cave drawings indicate, but with variation in dating methods and the uncertainty of what man-like creatures were, before 10,000 it is difficult to say. (291)
 - iii) Did animals die before the Fall? (292)
 - (a) For the young earth position, this question is not important.
 - (b) For the old earth advocates, this could explain ancient fossils on earth.
 - (i) Plants were already subject to death (Adam and Eve would eat them).
 - (ii) The curse of death applied only to man. (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12) Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
 - (iii) We cannot know whether God created animals subject to death, but it remains a real possibility.
 - iv) What about dinosaurs? (293)
 - (a) Young earth: dinosaurs and humans lived on earth together.
 - (b) Old earth: some would say dinosaurs became extinct before the end of Day 6 of creation and others that they were alive with Adam and Eve and named in Genesis 2:19-20.
 - v) Are the six days of creation twenty-four-hour days? (293) Young Earth supporters would favor twenty-four hour days. Old Earth supporters would allow for long periods of time, millions of years, during which God created the earth.
 - (i) In favor of long periods, the Hebrew word *yom*, “day” is sometimes used to refer not to a twenty-four hour literal day but to a longer period of time. (Gen. 2:4; Pro 25:13; Eccl. 7:14; Exod. 20:12)
 - (ii) Day 6 includes so many events that it must have been longer than twenty four hours (i.e., creation of animals and man, blessing of Adam and Eve, commands regarding the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil, bringing the animals to be named, finding no helper fit for Adam, and Adam's sleep and Eve's creation). See Gen. 1-2.

(iii) Day 7 seems like it never ended (therefore very long!): The previous six days creative activities end with the phrase "and there was evening and there was morning," while the seventh ends with God's rest. Some would say that rest continues till today.

(iv) The fact that the word *day* refers to a longer period of time in Genesis 2:4 should caution

us about making dogmatic statements that the original readers would have certainly known that the author was talking about twenty-four-hour days.

(v) These points do not require us to believe in longer days, but they offer a possible meaning of texts (as passages that speak of the sun "rising" or "going down" do not require us to believe in an earth-centered universe).

(vi) In favor of a strict twenty-four-hour day for Genesis 1 (295)

1. The expression "And there was evening, and there was morning..." (e.g., Gen. 1:5).

2. The third day cannot be very long because the sun does not come into being until the fourth day, and plants cannot live without the sun.

3. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the 10 Commandments the word *day* is used to mean a twenty-four-hour day. (Exo 20:8-11)

4. Question: Is there anywhere else the Hebrew Bible that uses the word "days" in the plural, especially when a number is attached, to refer to anything other than a twentyfour-hour days. (Response: Ex. 20:12 uses a plural form to refer to periods of time, and making a singular sense of periods of time plural is not difficult for a reader to understand, even if no other Old Testament example exists). (Exo 20:12)

5. Jesus indicated that Adam and Eve were not created billions of years after the beginning of creation. (Mar 10:6). Response:

Conclusion on length of Genesis 1 days: God has not chosen to give us enough information to

come to a clear decision on this question.

2) Both "old earth" and "young earth" theories are valid options for Christians who believe the Bible today. (298)

a) "Old earth" (4.5 billion year old earth; 13-14 billion year old universe) theories of creation:

i) Day-age view (298):

(a) Each day of creation is a long period of time.

(b) Attracted to this view because of scientific evidence.

(i) Liquid magma, such as in California, take 1 million years to cool.

(ii) Continental drift could not have happened 20,000 years.

(iii) Coral reefs apparently take hundreds of thousands of years to form.

(c) Difficulties:

(i) The sequence of Gen 1 does not exactly correspond to current scientific understanding to the development of life (putting sea creatures—day 5—before trees—day 3—and other land animals—day 6—as well as fish—day 5—before birds).

(ii) The greatest difficulty: the sun is created millions of years after the creation of plants and trees (though the Hebrew verb *'āsāh* in Gen. 1:16 can be taken as perfect—God "had made" the sun and moon earlier.).

ii) Literary framework view (300): The six days of Genesis 1 are not intended to indicate a chronological sequence of events, but are rather a literary "framework," which the author uses to teach us about God's creative activity. This framework is skillfully

constructed so that the first three days and the second three days correspond to each other.

(a) Days of forming and filling

Days of forming

Day 1: Light and darkness separated

Day 2: Sky and waters separated

Day 3: Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees

Days of filling

Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars (lights in the heaven)

Day 5: Fish and birds

Day 6: Animals and man

(b) Strengths (301)

(i) Neat correspondence

(ii) Avoids conflicts with modern science

(iii) Avoids conflicts with Genesis 1 and 2 where man seems to be formed before plants and animals

(iv) Shows that Genesis 2:5 does not indicate literal twenty-four-hour days since there were not yet plants due to lack of rain (in the twenty-four-hour scheme plants could survive three or four days without rain).

(c) Points against the framework theory (302)

(i) The parallels are not as neat as assumed (e.g., the sun, moon, and stars would be placed in the “firmament,” created on the second day, not the first).

(ii) We should not accept a theory because it relieves us from burden of trying to reconcile with science.

(iii) Those who have not adopted the framework theory do not see conflict between Genesis 1 and 2 (the latter merely recapitulates the former as detail important for the account of the creation of Adam and Eve).

(iv) Genesis 2:5 does not really say plants were not on the earth, just that God’s work of creation was not yet complete (a mist was coming up from the earth already). (Gen 2:4-6)

(v) Genesis strongly suggests a chronological sequence of events.

1. A sequence in the increasing complexity of creation

2. A sequence in numbered days (1-2-3-4-5-6-7)

(vi) This sequence is implied in the command to “rest” in Ex. 20:8-11.

Conclusion on framework theory: It does not deny the truthfulness of Scripture, but upon closer inspection seems very unlikely.

b) “Young earth” (10,000 to 20,000 years old) theories of creation (304)

i) Creation with an appearance of age (Mature Creationism) (304)

(a) The original creation must have had an “appearance of age” (e.g., Adam and Eve were created as mature adults, and the light they saw the first evening from most star would take thousands or even millions of years to reach the earth).

(b) Some object that this makes God an “apparent deceiver.” Yet, if God creates a mature Adam and Eve and tells us he did so, is he a “deceiver”?

(c) One significant problem with the appearance of age: fossils. Responsible Christians do not want to say that God scattered fossils of dead creatures throughout the earth to give it the appearance of age.

(d) Explanations for fossils: (a) current dating methods are incorrect by colossal proportions because of changes brought about by the fall or flood or (b) current dating methods are approximately correct, and the earth is many millions or billions of years old.

ii) Flood geology (306)

(a) Tremendous natural forces unleashed by the flood at the time of Noah (Gen. 6-9) significantly altered the face of the earth.

(b) This cause the creation of coal and diamonds, for example, within the space of a year rather than hundreds of millions of years, because of the extremely high pressure exerted by water on the earth.

(c) The geological arguments put forth by advocates of flood geology are technical and difficult for non-specialist evaluation.

(d) Flood geology advocates do not agree with either Christian or non-Christian scientists who have not acknowledged evidence of flood geology.

iii) Evidence from astronomy

(a) Why is all the evidence consistent with a universe about 13.7 billion years old?

3) Conclusions on the age of the earth (307)

a) Several scientific arguments for an old earth seem persuasive:

i) Earth: fossil-bearing rocks, coral reefs, continental drift, and the similarity of results from different kinds of radiometric dating.

ii) Astronomy: stars appear to have been shining for about 13 billion years.

iii) The age of rocks, minerals, meteorites, and the moon all appear to have an age of 4.5 billion years old.

iv) The weight of evidence is increasing yearly.

v) If the earth is only 10,000 years old, why didn't God make it look like it is 10,000 years old? And why did he make the universe give abundant evidence that makes it look like it is 13.7 billion years old?

4) The need for further understanding (308)

a) I agree that it is much easier to read Genesis 1 as 24 hour days. This is still possibly correct.

b) But the observable facts of creation seem increasingly to favor an old earth view.

c) The age of the earth is not directly taught in Scripture. We can think about it only by drawing more or less probable inferences from Scripture.

d) It seems best to 1) admit God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns and 2) encourage evangelical scientists and theologians who fall in both the young and old earth camps to begin work together more humbly and cooperatively.

Jam 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

e) I wrote in 1994: "It is likely that scientific research in the next ten or twenty years will tip the weight of evidence decisively toward either a young earth or old earth position, and the weight of biblical scholarly opinion will begin to shift decisively in one direction or another." (*Systematic Theology*, 309)

f) This should not cause alarm, because the truthfulness of Scripture is not threatened (Gen. 1 leaves enough uncertainty that either position is possible).

F. Application (309)

a. The material universe is good in itself.

b. We should seek to be like early Christians, who "received their food with glad and generous hearts" (Ac. 2:46).

c. This doctrine should encourage some Christians to do scientific and technological research into the goodness of God's abundant creation.

d. We recognize more clearly how science and technological study glorifies God, enabling us to

discover how incredibly wise, powerful, and skillful God was in his work of creation.

Psa 111:2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.

e. We can wholeheartedly enjoy creative activities (artistic, musical, athletic, domestic, literary, etc.) with an attitude of thanksgiving that our Creator God enables to imitate him in our creativity.