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GOD CREATED

Genesis 1:1-2

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Genesis Lesson 2

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Before we work through Genesis 1 & 2, I want to give you a framework for thinking about the creation-evolution debate that is sparked by these chapters. The widespread acceptance of evolution as a fact in our universities has shaken the faith of many Christians and has led to the teaching of views such as theistic evolution in many Christian colleges. While there is room for some difference of opinion among Bible-believing Christians about the creation account, there is not *unrestricted* room. Since some of the views being espoused by professing Christians seem to be motivated by the desire to harmonize the Bible with the claims of evolution, we need to raise some questions about evolutionary theory and define the limits for interpreting the biblical record.

At the outset I want to remind you of what I said last week, that our approach to biblical revelation is of utmost importance. If you come to the Bible as a skeptic, demanding proof that it is true, you will not find any answers. God will not be held hostage by the demands of proud skeptics. As we saw, the Bible begins with the *fact* of God and draws the line in the sand, confronting us with the need to submit to God as the Sovereign Lord of our lives. This is not to say that we must check our brains at the door, but it is to say that we must come to God with submissive, contrite hearts, ready to turn from our sin and do His will. Then He will provide reasonable answers to our questions. As Hebrews 11:6 puts it, "... he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Genesis 1 as well as many other Scriptures affirm that ...

God supernaturally created the universe by His power.

Every Bible-believing Christian must hold to that proposition. The debate centers on *how* and *when* God created the universe. Did He do it through speaking the word in six 24-hour days in relatively recent history, or did He use natural processes over longer periods of time? In discussing these questions, we encounter some ...

AREAS OF TENSION:

**The age of the earth and the geologic record*--Science claims that the earth is 3-5 billion years old, based on various factors such as the age of rock formations, the fossil record, various dating methods, etc. The fact that we can see distant galaxies that are millions of light years away seems to argue that the universe, at least, is millions of years old, since it took the light from those galaxies that long to travel to us. But, some creationists argue for a relatively young earth, explaining the apparent age either by special creation or the world-wide flood.

**Evolution*--Science claims that all life evolved from a single lower form over billions of years, with man being the highest form. The Bible is clear that human beings, at the very least, and probably all of the other forms of life, are the special creation of God. We need to be careful to define how the word "evolution" is being used. Sometimes it is used by naturalistic evolutionists to mean "change." They point to obvious changes or adaptations of species to their environments and say, "See, change is undeniable." But then they leap to the unwarranted conclusion that such changes have resulted in the formation of completely new and different species in a gradual, steadily upward progression from the first one-celled organisms to modern man. Thus they drastically change the meaning of the word.

The usual explanations for how such gradual improvements have occurred is through *random mutations* and *natural selection*. Mutations are sudden variations that cause the offspring to differ from their parents. Natural selection, sometimes called "survival of the fittest," means that those forms best suited for the survival of the species endure, while those not suited become extinct. If it seems unlikely that the present level of complexity and diversity happened through these means, the evolutionist claims that given 5 billion years, it could happen.

**The age of man*--Science claims that man is 2-3 million years old; if the genealogies in Genesis are taken as accurate, even with gaps about the furthest back you can push the creation of man is 10-20,000 B.C.

SOME PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

There have been different attempts to harmonize these areas of tension with the Bible. I can only deal with each briefly.

**Theistic evolution*--Of course, atheistic evolution, which believes that the universe has evolved through chance plus time, is completely incompatible with the Bible. But a number of scholars have proposed different forms of theistic evolution. These vary in their approach, but all are combinations of divine creation and the evolutionary process. Some say that God created the original matter and then superintended the process of evolution which took over at that point. Others would say that God intervened at various points with special creation, and that evolution operated between those points. But invariably theistic evolutionists explain the early chapters of Genesis as being allegory or poetry, but not accurate historical accounts.

What about it? First, any view of theistic evolution which claims to hold to the authority of Scripture must reject the evolution of man. The Bible is clear that man is the special creation of God, made in His image. And even if Adam evolved, Genesis 2 is clear that God made Eve from Adam's rib. Outside the Pentateuch, there are nine passages referring to Adam or Eve as historical people. If the first human couple was just a notch above their ape-like parents who bore them, it destroys the biblical doctrine of man created in the image of God and the doctrine of the fall of the human race into sin.

Second, if we must allow for the special creation of the human race, then why not allow for the special creation of other animals and plants? The only reason not to would be the supposed evidence of evolution. But the evidence is not nearly as strong as its proponents claim. Any argument is only as strong as its presuppositions. As Phillip Johnson cogently argues in *Darwin on Trial* [IVP], Darwinian evolution is built on the presupposition that science deals with natural processes only. God or miracles are excluded by assumption as not being in the realm of science. It is no surprise, therefore, that, having assumed that God could not have caused the material world, evolutionists conclude that it happened by some natural process, even when there is powerful evidence of intelligent design. But this is merely begging the question.

The fossil record is given as the first line of evidence for evolution in *World Book Encyclopedia* (1985, "Evolution," by James H. Brown, professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona). But, in fact, the fossil record is one of the major problems facing the evolutionist. If there was a gradual change from the lowest forms of life to the highest, there should be an abundance of transitional fossils. But, there are gaps in the fossil record at precisely the points the evolutionist needs evidence. In fact, the gaps are right where they should be if God created the species distinct from one another.

Darwin admitted the problem; in fact, he conceded that it was the most serious objection to his theory (Johnson, pp. 46-47), but he thought that further discoveries would prove him right. Darwin's most formidable opponents at first were not ministers, but fossil experts (Johnson, p. 45). Further discoveries have not proved Darwin right, which has led some leading evolutionists to speculate that instead of Darwin's gradual evolution, there were sudden, major changes that resulted in new species. But they have no idea how such changes could have taken place and no scientific evidence to support their theory. They have had to reinterpret the fossil record that seems to support the biblical creation account (Johnson, pp. 45-62)!

Evolution has no way of explaining how positive, permanent change takes place. Supposedly mutations cause the change in a species and natural selection guarantees the permanence of the change. But mutations are usually harmful, not beneficial, and the odds of natural selection preserving the rare beneficial changes are so slim as to be nonexistent. Neither mutations nor natural selection can explain where the new genes come from to produce new, useful organs and entirely new species. How do animals without a backbone suddenly develop one? How do organisms without teeth even gradually over millions of years develop into animals with teeth? How do animals who lay eggs suddenly develop a uterus, ovaries, and the necessary hormonal system to stimulate ovulation? How did that happen at just the same time that the male of the species developed the ability to impregnate the female, and how did this major change in one mutant couple take over the whole species? If it did take over, why didn't the lower forms of life eventually die out?

Evolutionists jump over this insuperable problem in two ways. First, they posit incredible intelligence to lower forms of life or to this mysterious process of natural selection. For example, an article in *Newsweek* [April 12, 1982] reported how if foraging honey ants on their way to a termite feast meet an enemy colony, some rush back to the nest to recruit 200 or more reinforcements to march on the offending colony. Then, "The ants walk on stilt legs and rear their heads, drum their antennae on their opponents' abdomens and kick with their forelegs. No one gets killed, and soon the weaker ants decide it is the better part of valor to retreat and fight another day."

A Harvard professor explains that this ritual "evolved to spare ants the bloodshed of actual battle." "If the ants fought for real," he explains, "they'd have to sacrifice hundreds to get a food resource that is constantly changing, ... incurring an enormous cost for benefits that aren't that great." Isn't that amazing! The ants are smarter than we are! People fight and kill each other, but the ants decided that a real war wasn't worth the lost lives, so they stage a limited conflict instead.

Another issue of *Newsweek* ([5/28/79], p. 60) described the 17-year life cycle of a type of cicada. The larvae live for 17 years underground and then emerge for one month to mate and repeat the cycle. Why do they do it at 17-year intervals? A University of Chicago biologist speculates that these insects have developed a sophisticated strategy for survival. "Seventeen years is an unusual lifespan. If a predator had a life cycle of six years, for example, it would not encounter cicadas above ground more than once a century." He wants us to believe that these bugs not only had the intelligence to figure out that a 17-year cycle would fool their enemies, but also that they had the power to instigate the change once they all came to agree on the time! Can you imagine the cicada council getting together millions of years ago and debating how long their life-cycle should be to ensure maximum survival? One cicada suggests that five years in the ground is long enough, but others argue that they won't survive unless they pick an odd number like 17! Finally it comes to a vote and the 17 year guys win! Then all they had to figure out was how to change their body clocks so that they stayed in the ground that long and all came out at the same time!

I hate to mock such examples of erudition, but the fact that such patently stupid reasoning could seriously be believed by professors at such prestigious institutions as Harvard and the University of Chicago shows the incredible stranglehold that blind faith in the theory of evolution has in our educational circles. The evolutionist is taking God's wisdom as seen in the intricacies of insect behavior and attributing that wisdom to some impersonal, inexplicable mystery of evolution. It takes far less faith to attribute it to an intelligent God.

A second way that evolutionists dodge the problem of how random mutations and natural selection could account for the wide differentiation of species that we now observe is by saying that given 5 billion years, anything could happen. There is a well-known statement to the effect that a million monkeys typing on a million typewriters for a million years might by chance type a Shakespearean play. To illustrate how ludicrous this analogy is, Dr. Bolton Davidheiser tested the mathematical probability of a million monkeys typing on special typewriters with only capital letters and seven punctuation keys at the rate of 12 and a half keys per second, how long would it take them to type accidentally the first verse of Genesis? To explain the incredible numbers, he uses this analogy:

Think of a large mountain which is solid rock. Once a year a bird comes and rubs its beak on the mountain, wearing away an amount equivalent to the finest grain of sand At this rate of erosion the mountain would disappear very slowly, but when completely gone the monkeys would still just be warming up.

Think of a rock not the size of a mountain, but a rock larger than the whole earth. Try to think of a rock so large that if the earth were at its center its surface would touch the nearest star. This star is so far away that light from it takes more than four years to get here, traveling 186,000 miles every second. If a bird came once every million years and removed an amount equivalent to the finest grain of sand, four such rocks would be worn away before the champion super simians would be expected to type Genesis 1:1 (*Evolution and the Christian Faith* [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company], pp. 362-363).

And evolutionists accuse creationists of taking a blind leap of faith! Since evolution has so many problems that militate against it, why buy into theistic evolution, especially since you have to sacrifice a normal interpretation of the biblical account to do it? Theistic evolution is not an option for the Bible-believing Christian.

There are some other proposed solutions to the areas of tension between science and the Bible. I must be brief in presenting these. Any of the three I'm going to mention are viable options. I can't give all the strengths and weaknesses of each view, but encourage you to dig further on your own.

**The day-age theory*--also called progressive creationism. This view says that God created the world directly and deliberately, but that He did it over long periods of time that correspond roughly to the geological ages. There are three variations of this view: (1) day-geological age, which assigns different geological eras to the creation days in Genesis 1; (2) modified intermittent day, in which each creative era is preceded by a 24-hour solar day; (3) overlapping day-age, with each creative era overlapping with each other (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* [Baker], p. 389).

Each variation says that God created the prototype and then allowed for some process of change over long periods of time under His providence. The advantages of this type of explanation are that it allows for scientific data which seem to support the antiquity of the earth. It seeks to take Genesis seriously, not in a mythological sense, as theistic evolution does. It challenges change between species while allowing for adaptation and variation within each species. The disadvantages of the view are: (1) A straight reading of Genesis seems to indicate that "day" means a 24-hour day; (2) it is difficult to harmonize the material in Genesis 1 with the findings of geological, biological, and other sciences; (3) it introduces death into the world (at least the death of animals) before the fall, whereas the Bible seems to make death the consequence of man's fall into sin.

**Six-day creationism*--This theory interprets the Genesis account as six literal days. It posits a relatively young earth (about 12,000 years) and accounts for the geologic and fossil records by the worldwide flood and the cataclysmic events surrounding it. The advantages of this view are that it takes the Genesis record in a

literal or normal sense. It rightly attacks the faulty reasoning of evolution. And, it offers a number of creative and credible explanations of geology, paleontology, and biology from men who hold scientific doctorates.

For example, they attack many of the dating methods and assumptions behind geologic theory as resting on a uniformitarian-assumption (the view that natural processes in past times have been no different than they are at present). On this basis, they challenge the supposed antiquity of some of the supposedly early human fossils, which are subject to much subjective interpretation, always from an evolutionary hypothesis. The six-day creationists also point out that fossils are only formed and preserved when there is rapid burial and lithification, which argues for a universal catastrophic flood. Also, they argue (and, I think, rightly so) that God necessarily created the world with the appearance of age, so that the light from distant stars was present on earth the first night they were created. The weaknesses of the six-day view, according to evangelical critics, are that it denies the strong evidence for the antiquity of the earth and that it seems to put too much weight on the effects of the flood.

**The gap theory--*This view says that Genesis 1:1 describes the original creation of the universe by God out of nothing. But between verses 1 and 2, there is a gap of an indeterminable amount of time. Verse 2 records the results of a judgment of God upon the creation, probably due to Satan's rebellion. From the middle of verse 2 on describes God's recreation or restitution of the earth in six literal days, culminating in putting man on the earth as the new regent under God in place of the fallen Satan. This view allows for the earth to be relatively old, but holds to a recent date (no earlier than 20,000 B.C.) for the creation of man. (A variation of this view allows for a pre-Adamic race of men, but that view seems biblically untenable.)

There are some interesting biblical arguments for this view. Genesis 1:1-2 seem set off from the account of the days of creation. The words "formless," "void," and "darkness," (1:2) are consistently used elsewhere to describe God's judgment (Isa. 34:11; Jer. 4:23-26; Exod. 10:21; 1 Sam. 2:9; and others). Isaiah 45:18 says that God did not create the earth "a waste place" (NASB; the Hebrew

word is the same as “formless” in Gen. 1:2). Why would God start the creation in this condition? From Genesis 3 we learn that Satan had already fallen. Since Satan is called the prince of this world, could not he have ruled the world for God in an earlier age? The condition described in Genesis 1:2 would then be the result of God’s judgment stemming from Satan’s rebellion. The earth was covered with water, which allows for more than one cataclysmic flood, giving more explanation for the fossil and geologic record.

Bible-believing critics of this view say that it reads too much other Scripture into these early verses of Genesis and that it leaves us with just one verse (Gen. 1:1) describing the original creation. The six-day creationists level a number of other criticisms against it (Henry Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* [Craig Press], pp. 62-66). But I must confess that I find it intriguing and plausible.

Conclusion

Whichever view you take, I think that the genealogies in Genesis limit us to a date of creation for Adam no earlier than 20,000 B.C., probably more like 8,000 B.C. I prefer either the six-day creation view or the gap theory, because they adhere more closely to the biblical text than the day-age theory. But some solid biblical scholars hold to the day-age view, so we must allow for it.

But the bottom line we must hold firmly is that God supernaturally created the universe, including the earth, plant and animal life, and the first human beings. It is *not* due to natural processes. If we accept the first verse of the Bible, we must allow for the miraculous when it comes to the origin of all that is, because God is over natural processes, not subject to them. And, as I emphasized last week, it means that God is over us. That’s the real issue at the heart of all the explanations of origins. If God supernaturally created the earth and the human race, then we must submit ourselves to His sovereignty by living in obedience to His revealed will.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we avoid obscurantism (e.g., the church being against Copernicus' views), but also avoid compromising biblical truth in an attempt to accommodate science?
2. Which arguments for evolution are the most formidable? Where is biblical creationism most vulnerable to attack?
3. How do biblical creationists deal with adaptation in species?
4. Which view of origins do you find most appealing? Why?

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