




Evangelical Perspectives

ON ORIGINS

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בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת
הָאָרֶץ :

In the beginning, God created the
heavens and the earth.

How will we approach this topic?

1. Seek to understand what it means to approach this topic from an evangelical perspective.
2. Review some of the dominant theories of creation, and the theological models and terms of creation.
3. Overview the biblical textual basis of creation in Genesis 1-2 (and 1-11).
4. Take time for questions and answers.

General Important Questions:

Does the bible stand at odds with science, or is there a concordance between the two? What are the dominant theories?

What does Genesis 1-2 teach us about Origins, and does our approach to scripture have a bearing on interpretation?

Is Genesis 1-11 historical narrative or epic poetry?

What are some basic theories of creation and how do they fit an interpretative approach to Genesis 1-2?

Chart for Views on Origins Spectrum



	Creationism	Intelligent Design	Theistic Evolution	Darwinian Evolution
Other names	Instantaneous, Day Age, Progressive	Intelligent Design	Evolutionary Creationism	neoDarwinian
Classification	young earth/younger earth/old earth	old earth/younger earth	old earth	old earth
Means of creation	God/supernatural/instantaneous	Intelligent Designer	God-directed evolution	natural
Basic Concepts	God created each kind and species uniquely; change occurs within species	An intelligent designer created all varieties allows for changes within species	God used evolution to produce all kinds and species	random and unguided process; change over time can explain every variation; universal common descent
Time of Universe	6 days/6 epochs	varies	13.7	13.7 billion
Earth	6 days/6 epochs	varies	4+ billion	4+ billion
Mankind	on the 6th day	varies	6 million	6 million
Ancestry	each kind designed uniquely	many unique designs	one common	one common
Dinosaurs	co-exists with man	varies	predates man	predates man
Fossil record	recent and uniquely diverse	varies	long record, with gaps	long record with gaps

Special Note: the chart provides generalizations of positions and individual theorists may affirm different perspectives.

A Quick Glance at Darwinian Evolution

Darwinian Evolution
neoDarwinian
old earth
natural
random and unguided process; change over time can explain every variation; universal common descent
13.7 billion
4+ billion
6 million
one common
predates man
long record with gaps

Darwinism: provided for a mechanism that did not depend upon the supernatural (God).

- Requires a long period of time for development, incremental changes resulting from minute mutations from simple to complex – this process is random and unguided, requires evidence of transitional forms,
- Problems with Darwinian evolution:
 - ▶ fossil record shows significant gaps and little transitional record
 - ▶ explosions of life at unexpected times: i.e. the Cambrian explosion
 - ▶ inexplicable means of new information introduction into DNA
 - ▶ lack of demonstration of trans-species development
 - ▶ mutations typically degrade rather than enhance

1. Young Earth Creationism

Sees Genesis 1-2, and 1-11 overall, as historical narrative – this is one of the significant questions of the nature of the text.

- ▶ Types of Hebrew writing: poetry and narrative are the two broad categories.
- ▶ Note Dr. Steven Boyd's analysis of the "vav consecutive" and the designation of Genesis 1-11 as narrative.
- ▶ It is not mythological epoch as in other ANE texts and creation stories.
- ▶ YEC's correlation to the theological theories would fall within the Factual, Historical, Six days with twenty-four hours. Many YEC also would likely affirm a Mature-Earth Perspective.

Young Earth Creationism

Sees Genesis 1-2 (1-11) as factual days

- ▶ Six factual Days of Creation.
- ▶ Identifies “day” as a specific 24 hour period.
 - ▶ Utilizes the phrase “and there was evening, and there was morning” to validate the concept of a single day.
 - ▶ When “day” is used with a number, it typically specifies a single day.
 - ▶ Other similar words could have been used, but are not...
 - ▶ Exodus 20:11 “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth...”

Young Earth Creationism

Sees Genesis 1-2 (1-11) as instantaneous creative acts on the six days rather than epochs of millions of years.

- ▶ A unique word is used: Bara' (ברא) that is only used of God in his creative activity.
- ▶ The implication is that the heavens and earth were created out of nothing – i.e. no existing matter.
- ▶ The days represent a logical and successive movement of creation, and that many “kinds” are representative of the phylum from which different species arise.
- ▶ A usual tenet of YEC is the affirmation that there was no death before the fall. (Please note the earlier slide inadvertently left the negative particle from this sentence: the YEC position typically affirms “no death” before the Fall as is indicated here.)
- ▶ The timeline of creation would have begun somewhere between 6,000-10,000 BC, based in large part on the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

Young Earth Creationism

The flood of Noah was a factual and global flood of cataclysmic proportions.

- ▶ Affirms the factual historicity of Genesis 6-9, as also expressed by Jesus in Matthew 24:37-39
- ▶ The flood was not a localized phenomenon, but global – represented by the following concepts as in Gn 7:19 “... so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.”
- ▶ The water came from above and below (Gn 7:11 “the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of the sky were opened.”)
- ▶ The land in the pre-flood era was significantly different than now and the current mountain ranges resulted from post-flood trauma of tectonic plates shifting, and global reshaping.
- ▶ Ironically, many cultures share flood stories.
- ▶ Geological evidence can be interpreted to indicate the flood experience.

2. Progressive Creation

(Old Earth Creationism – often utilizes the Day-Age approach)

- ▶ Also affirms biblical inerrancy and the authority of God's Word
- ▶ The book of scripture and the book of nature both affirm God as creator, and there is no conflict between the two.
- ▶ Progressivists allow for a number of possibilities:
 - ▶ Creation days are revelatory.
 - ▶ The 24 hour days are punctuated and then separate by epochs or eras – this falls in the intermittent category.
 - ▶ A possible gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3 (or possibly 1:1 and 1:2).
 - ▶ Creation days are long epochs, eras, or periods of possibly millions of years.
 - ▶ There may be time relativity in play for the length of the days.

Progressive Creation (Old Earth Creationism)

- ▶ Ross specifically affirms Day-Age Creationism
- ▶ Thus, the concept of day could be understood as a non-literal 24-hour day but rather as indicative of periods of time.
- ▶ In contrast to YEC, Ross advocates for the word “day” to have four possible lexical meanings: (note page 73)
 1. a portion of the daylight hours
 2. All of the daylight hours
 3. One cycle from evening to evening, or morning to morning
 4. A long, yet finite time period

Progressive Creation (Old Earth Creationism)

- ▶ Importantly, PC affirms that God is the author of creation and also the intervenor – i.e. the one who initiated, guided, and sustained the process of creating.
- ▶ The sequence of creation as biblically described coincides and correlates with generally established scientific record. This is called concordance.
- ▶ This perspective generally affirms also that God created “kinds” and that the resultant diversity today is not the result of universal common descent.
- ▶ The flood was significant to all people of that time, but a global flood was not necessary and may have been limited in scope. Ross asserts there is a correlation with the Last Ice Age (p. 85)

Progressive Creation (Old Earth Creationism)

- ▶ Death before the fall of mankind did occur, and would have been necessary given the amount of time that transpired. There is no biblical incongruity with this concept.
- ▶ However, PC advocates assert that Adam and Eve are real progenitors of the human race, and not a “population” of Adams and Eves. (<https://reasons.org/explore/blogs/the-cells-design/adam-and-eve-a-primordial-pair-or-a-population>)
- ▶ Progressive Creationists could potentially affirm the theological theories of Day-Age or possibly Revelatory.

3. Intelligent Design

- ▶ Uniquely not faith based, in fact it considers itself neutral to the question of whether there is a God, though as you can imagine it is often “friendly” to creationists. As such it does not correlate to the theological models, except that some individuals who affirm ID are also believers and affirm a model.
- ▶ For instance, it doesn't attempt to interpret scripture, or provide a sequential concordance between the biblical account of creation and science. Yet it affirms that the process of life development resulted from the intentional intervention and intelligent guidance – which indicates design.
- ▶ “intelligent design attempts to explain the observed complexity and information-rich structures found in living organisms and other features of life and the universe...intelligent design is an evidence based scientific theory about life's origin and development that challenges strictly materialistic views of evolution.” (p. 179)
- ▶ Intentionally seeks scientific answers that confront the claims of evolution, recognizing that evolution as a system has significant gaps and flaws.

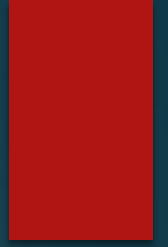
Intelligent Design

- ▶ ID asserts that “design” was a recognized feature in the development of science even among its early innovators such as Sir Isaac Newton – “this most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.” (181)
- ▶ The concept of design is evident in the many inexplicable systems that could not have mutated or through a random, unguided process, but rather are formed in their complexity by a designer.
- ▶ This intricacy of design is known as the principle of *irreducible complexity* which states that due to the complexity of a system, should there be one level or layer out of place or incomplete, the next level could not be formed, much less succeed.

Intelligent Design

- ▶ Modern day evolutionists, building on Darwinian theory, assert that this complexity only yields the appearance of design, and given enough time the process of chance would yield similar results.
- ▶ ID proposes, however:
 1. chance mutation never leads to more successful organisms or a greater complexity but invariably yields damage or detrimental effects.
 2. Variation has to have some type of introduction of new information that is successful and that has to come from somewhere – thus design.

Intelligent Design



- ▶ An example often used is computer code.
 1. First, computer code obviously has a creator.
 2. Random introduction of new code without intent leads to disruption
 3. Insertion of specific code by a programmer enhances the program

- ▶ DNA and the Human Genome is now known to be an information system. “...the chemical subunits of DNA (the nucleotide bases) function like letters in a written text or digital character or symbols in computer software.” (187)

- ▶ The probability of the information randomly “working” through random introduction of genetic material is so unlikely that it is impossible – unless it is designed.

Intelligent Design



- ▶ Another important principle of ID is related to question of where does the original information come from?
- ▶ Darwin believed (so he thought) that he had explained how a single cell organism could adapt or mutate and develop into another type of organism, but he failed to answer the question of the origin of the single cell organism.
- ▶ ID contends that a designer provides the best option among many competing theories. This was called the “inference to the best explanation” as described by Peter Lipton. (199)

4. Evolutionary Creation


- ▶ Founded by the leader of the Human Genome Project and outgoing head of the NIH.
- ▶ “Evolutionary creation is the view that God created the universe, earth, and life over billions of years, and that the gradual process of evolution was crafted and governed by God to create the diversity of all life on earth.” (125)
- ▶ Also uses the world of nature and the natural sciences as the second book that affirms God as creator.
- ▶ Sees the biblical books as written by human authors who were inspired. And as often quoted from John Walton, “the bible was written for us, but it was not written to us.” (128) Thus, Genesis 1-11 is written with the cosmology of the ancient world in view, and with a figurative, non-scientific concepts that would remind people of the truth of God as creator.

Evolutionary Creation

- ▶ The universe and the earth are billions of years old.
- ▶ The natural mechanism of evolution provided for all life as we know it now.
- ▶ There is a universal common ancestor.
- ▶ “Evolutionary creationists go much further. We accept that natural selection and other evolutionary mechanisms, acting over long periods of time, eventually result in major changes in body structure. Some people call this ‘macroevolution.’” (139)
- ▶ Thus, they affirm the phylogenetic tree (rather than forest) and give the example of a whale that is claimed to have evolved from a wolf-like land animal. (141)

Summary Overview

1. Three of the previous four theories affirm God as creator, and affirm scripture as authoritative – Intelligent Design doesn't correlate its work with scripture, but it affirms that there was an intelligent agent who designed the creative processes.
2. However, they maintain distinctives in the approach to scripture. Young Earth Creationists (YEC) and Progressive Creationists or Day Age Creationists (PC) take a more factual approach to Genesis 1-2, while Evolutionary Creationists (EC) or Theistic Evolutionists generally understand the scriptural texts to be more figurative or even mythological as similar to other Ancient Near Eastern stories of creation. Intelligent Design intentionally avoids the question of scripture altogether.
3. YEC and PC both affirm that God created distinctive “kinds” of animals, and uniquely created mankind in the image of God. EC accepts that there is a common universal organism from which all animals developed – and mankind developed from an ape ancestor. Intelligent Design rejects evolution (generally even theistic evolution) and that a designer created a number of “kinds” thus there is a phylogenetic forest.



Excursus: Interpretive Theories or Terms

Theological Theories:

Six Day Creation (Six twenty-four hour periods)

Six Day Creation Interpretation – the Genesis narrative presents a sequence of six twenty-four periods whereby God created the heavens, earth, and all that is in them – culminating with the creation of mankind on the sixth day.

- Each day reflects a specific twenty-four period, reinforced by the use of terms such as “day” and “evening and morning.”
- A chronology can be determined using the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, and thus the time frame for the creation was somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago.
- Most of the major questions related to fossilization, development of mountain ranges, and separation of land masses are due to the global flood at the time of Noah.
- Asserts that a literal understanding is important to biblical theology and God’s redemptive plan, due in part to an affirmation of a real “Adam.”

Theological Theories: Mature Earth Creation

Mature Earth Interpretation – the concept is primarily applicable to the YEC position, in that many facets of the universe appear old or would have needed billions of years to span distance or development, but in fact can be accounted for as relatively recent.

- Mature Earth proposes that such things as the light radiating from distant galaxies, which may have taken millions of years to travel, were created in place and in existence immediately.
- Fossils, and geological formations were created as a finished product; e.g. some fossils were embedded “maturely” while others likely occurred after the creation.
- An example would be if you were commissioned to paint a portrait, you would present the completed picture rather than either a half-finished or a number of canvasses showing the different developments of such.

Theological Theories: Day - Age

Day – Age Interpretation – the narrative is seen as presenting days to reflect ages.

- The ages are unspecified in length but Day - Age interpreters typically equate days with millions of years. The day – ages are sequential and do not overlap.
- This allows for a “concordance” with natural sciences, with only some contrasts to arise.
- Many Day – Age interpreters align themselves with the International Council on Inerrancy’s position.

Theological Theories: Intermittent and Analogical Days

The Intermittent Day Theory – there were six literal (24 hour cycle) days but those days were not immediately sequential one after the other. In between each, there may have been thousands or millions or years.

Analogical Day – is the concept of a creation workday/workweek such as is typical for the biblical weekly cycle of six days of work followed by rest for mankind. Thus, the creation account is modeled after a human workweek. In some cases, a workday could indicate God was active and working, and then ceased, only to take up the work again at another time. The days of creation are normally understood as consecutive but may have long periods between each of the days.

Theological Theories: Relative Time – Time Dilation

Relative Time or Dilation – approaches creation with questions concerning the functions of natural laws, or the circumvention of assumed natural laws in the creative process.

- means that the processes that occurred in creation operated at a faster rate (or a different rate assumed to be faster) than current natural temporal and natural processes. Instead of time as a garden hose, think of time as the bell shape of a tuba.
- Some will refer to the days, or cycles, of creation as epochs whereby natural principles are superseded and time was accelerated.
- Einstein's theory of the relativity time is used by some to indicate that time passes more slowly near a large mass object, while conversely faster when not influenced. The theory proposes that certain "cosmological models may allow for a rapid passage of time (on the order of several billion years) while only six days of time elapsed on earth during Creation week." (<https://answersresearchjournal.org/time-dilation-cosmological-models/>)

Theological Theories: Framework Interpretation

Frame Interpretation – the creation narrative in Genesis is presented as a literary device that both affirms God as creator and polemically refutes other creation myths of the Ancient Near East (ANE).

- An example is that the sun and moon on day four are not even named, compared to the frequent ANE religious worship of the Sun and Moon.
- The days of Genesis 1 are set in a literary construct of 1-3 paralleling 4-6, thus “framing the days.” 1 & 4 - light and the luminaries, 2 & 5 sea/air and fish/birds, and 3 & 6 land/plants and animals/man.
- There is no match or “concordance” between Genesis details and natural history.
- This view doesn't necessarily deny a historical creation, but rather that the purpose of Genesis 1 is to provide a theological construct of God as creator.

Theological Theories: Revelatory Days

Revelatory Days – takes a non-chronological approach to the narrative of Genesis 1.

- Affirms God as creator, and doesn't necessarily deny that there was an historical event of creation.
- Does not seek to determine the length of days or ages, thus the interpretation doesn't assign young or old to the creation account.
- Rather, understands the days as a series of visions given to Moses whereby he recorded the events over a six day period. Each vision then was respective of a different day.
- The focus is on what God revealed to Moses.

Theological Theories: The Gap Theory

The Gap Theory – the gap theory holds that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 there was a heavenly insurrection that required a recreation beginning with verse 3.

- The concept affirms that in verse 1 God created the heavens and the earth, and it was good.
- But then there was a revolution in heaven whereby the Satan and his angels revolted. The correlation with Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 is used as the primary basis of the the “casting down” of satan and his army.
- The revolt corrupted the earth and reverted it to a state of “formless and void.”
- God then began the process of re-creation and did so on the six consecutive days.

Notes

- Numbers in parentheses indicate citations from the book: *Four Views on Creation, Evolution and Intelligent Design*, ed. J.B. Stump. Counterpoints Series: Zondervan Publishing, 2017.
- Occasional references or quotes are cited by the website or source material in reduced font following the quote.
- Please note: a correction was made to slide 9: “A usual tenet of YEC is the affirmation that there was no death before the fall.” The earlier slide inadvertently left the negative particle from the sentence. The YEC position typically affirms “no death” before the Fall as is indicated here.
- The chart produced on slide 5 is a generalization of the various perspectives, and individual theorists may hold different positions than are represented by the categories.