

# Genesis, Science, Darwin and Missions!

## *Thoughts on the Creation Debate:*

### *Young Earth or Old Earth?*

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The Psalms were Israel's poetry. It was at least thirty centuries ago when a Hebrew poet looked up into the sky and marveled at what he saw. And he rejoiced at *the implications* of what he saw. He realized that as magnificent as the skies are, they are not nearly as glorious as the man or woman who looks up at them. And so he wrote these fabulous words:

**"<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"**

But how long have those stars been suspended in their Heavenly tent? That question did not seem to interest the Psalmist. Yet, it is of great concern today. Indeed, the current acrimony among evangelical Christians over the age of the Earth needs to be addressed. But calmly. After all, in the end, we born-again believers all agree that God is the "Maker of Heaven and Earth!" [Psalm 121].

Evolution. Creation. Darwin. All "hot topics." Before proceeding, let us clarify one point: "Evolution" is understood differently by different groups. For some, it is the theory that the creation simply evolved by random processes that gathered momentum and, over billions of years, yielded various species. This process, in their view, was without supervision or design. There is no need for any "first cause" or an all-powerful being [such as God!] to be included in our understanding of how the cosmos got here. In the words of the late Carl Sagan, "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was, or ever will be." Many modern people believe that.

For others, "Evolution" is understood as the unhurried process by which God created the Heavens and the Earth and all the species therein. They do not see evolution as synonymous with godlessness. Christian scientists such as Francis Collins see evolution as fascinating and elegant...something for which all people should praise God.

Those Christians who renounce evolution as impossible because it would contradict a literal reading of Genesis One are often surprised to learn that other Christians accept at least the possibility of evolution as the means through which God did his "Divine work!" Too often battle lines are drawn without realizing that there are multiple views. Now...

A bright young Christian woman at Cornerstone recently wrote to me asking if it is true that I do not think the creation was made in six, twenty-four hour days. She had "heard" that and wanted to know if it was accurate. And if so, why? How? Etc. That is my position as I have taught from the pulpit. I do not know if evolution will be ultimately proven true or false. But my sense is that the evidence is overwhelming for an old Earth created billions of years ago. This view has never been a problem to me relative to the Word of God. I say that because I have always thought, in over thirty years of study, that the creation material found in Genesis One and into Genesis Two was not intended to be a literal and scientific description of God's activities in creation. Rather, I understand that portion of Scripture to be figurative in nature and theologically thematic. But I wish to emphasize: my view of Genesis as non-literal was formed without regard to any scientific persuasion as to the age of the creation.

In any case, I asked my young friend Leah why she was asking me about this topic. Be assured, I was delighted that she had done so. Christians need to wrestle with these challenging issues. With her permission, I will share her response to my inquiry. [Please feel free to listen in on our conversation! We'd like to hear from you with your views! ☺]

**[From Leah] "Why did I ask? Because I want to learn. I've heard 3 basic ideas about how the world came to be: 1. Evolution. 2. God created the world over a long period of time. 3. God created the world in six 24-hour days. Obviously, I don't accept the first view since I am a Christian. As for the second view, I've always used this argument against it: "If God didn't mean 'day' in Genesis 1 as we know it today, what other parts of Scripture might I be misinterpreting? If God created the world over a long period of time, why wouldn't he just say so?" As for the third view, that is what I've always been taught (or indoctrinated), so that is what I believe as of now. I've always been taught that the earth is 6,000 to 10,000 years old, or around there. How old do you believe it is?"**

"Well! Good questions Leah! Here are my short responses: 1. I believe that God created the world over a long period of time. He might have used evolution to create the many species or maybe not. There are many Christians in the sciences who believe evolution took place. There are also many Christian

theologians who are known as "Theistic Evolutionists." They do not reject evolution. So Leah...I've responded to Items 1 and 2 by sort of collapsing them together. Item 3 regards the literal nature of the 24/6 pattern. I think those portions of Genesis were written as figurative language. My full explanation will come in a few pages. So, you must read on!

A quick word about *words* though. To quote you Leah: **'If God didn't mean 'day' in Genesis 1 as we know it today, what other parts of Scripture might I be misinterpreting?'** You've now waded into the deep weeds Leah! This high grass is known as Exegesis and Hermeneutics. The study of words and phrases and their meaning and application. Here is where sincere Christians often disagree.

This is part of the reason that Christians want to take the simplest path when applying the Bible. You're right! We do not want to misinterpret any portion of the Bible. If we're going to say some words do not mean what they seem to mean...where will that all end? Will we next be told that Jonah did not really get inside a whale? How about the parting of the sea? Or Jesus walking on the water? Or the Resurrection itself? If we can *fiddle* around with words and suggest that some things are not literal, how long until we lose our faith in the Word of God? Fair and good questions!

The good news is that we have ways of understanding the Biblical writings. Usually, literal accounts include specific names, dates and locations. Figurative accounts do not. The challenge with the Genesis material is that it does mention names and places but in a rather thematic and figurative way. For example, even the names *Adam and Eve* are not typical names used in a society. The word *Adam* was related to the Hebrew word for soil or earth. Thus, the first man was made from the dust of the Earth. The word *Eve* is related to *life*. Thus Eve was the mother of all the living. They were real people, but the whole presentation of their origins and interactions with God is written in an unusual fashion. The Genesis account seems figurative but is clearly literal on one level. There had to be a first couple! My point is that it is harder to classify Genesis One than the Jonah story or the time when the Lord Jesus Christ walked on the water.

But the fact is that we must examine every word and teaching and it is hard work. We cannot just take the easy path. I recall being disappointed by an old bumper sticker years ago that some well-meaning Christians used to have on their cars. It read: 'God said it! I believe it! That settles it!' That may seem clever but it is actually a little silly! God said *what?* And what did God *mean?* If I'm going to believe it...*and I am going to believe it...*don't I have to examine it closely to see not only what God said but *what God meant?*

Here is an example. In dealing with the sin of lust, the Lord Jesus Christ said this:

**'Matthew 5:29 (NIV) <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.'**

Now, does anyone really think the point Jesus is making is that a man [or woman] should gouge out their eyes? No. This was classic hyperbole. That is, exaggeration for effect. He was saying "Avoid sin! Hate it!" So, we can say we know what he said but that he did not mean that literally. Now Leah, consider your comment about the word **day**. Do we not use **day** in different ways? The Bible does. When Jesus referred to the coming judgment, he said this:

**Matthew 11:21-22 (NIV) <sup>21</sup> 'Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.'**

The **Day** of Judgment has always been considered the coming period in history when God will judge the world. Will it only be twenty-four hours? Or was he using **Day** to mean a time period? Even in the Genesis passage on creation, **Day** is used before the Sun is put in place! So, in what sense was the writer talking about a twenty-four hour day as we know it? Probably none.

Leah...words are meaningful only in their context. Here's a great example from the Apostle Paul. In his letter to the Romans, he said:

**Romans 1:8 (NIV) <sup>8</sup> 'First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.'**

Obviously Paul was using the word **all** to mean everywhere he went on his journeys. Why would I say that? Because at the time of Paul's letter to Rome, there was no way native American Indians or even tribes in what we call South Africa could have heard the Gospel. They would not even have heard of Rome! Yet Paul said **all over the world**. I think this illustrates again that we must get into the mind of the writer and understand his language as he intended it in his context. Bottom line: I think God's Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write a marvelous theological message that we find in Genesis One. Moses was prompted to describe in a poetic or quasi-poetic fashion, the greatness of God

in creation. That was his goal. It strikes me as impossible to think that he was writing a detailed explanation of creation intended for a scientific age centuries later!

Now...back to the age of the Earth. Here's my problem: I don't *know* how old it is! I am persuaded by the many people in the sciences that it is quite old. But exactly how old? I'm not sure. But before looking further at your questions, let us consider a little history. Simply put, in the minds of many Christians the real bad guy in all of this was Charles Darwin! In fact, some Christians are convinced that the godlessness in our modern society is a direct result of Darwin's teachings on evolution. Because of godless evolution, some are convinced that Darwin was the original moral bandit of modernity! They see him as responsible for presenting the idea that God was unnecessary and that humanity just evolved somehow out of a puddle of cosmic mud or something. Thus, they are committed to a campaign to discredit Darwin and evolution in the hope of restoring God to His rightful place of worship and appreciation. And the easiest way to discredit Darwin and godless evolution is to insist that the Genesis creation passages are literal. Therefore, they say that the creation cannot be very old and thus evolution cannot be true.

But the Genesis literature does not prove a young Earth [in my view] and modern science overwhelmingly proves an old Earth. So, could it be that our well-intentioned friends who are trying to discredit godless evolution are simply wrong in the way they are doing it? I think so. **BE ASSURED LEAH**...I hate the idea of godless evolution! But the way to discredit it is to exalt God and lead others to him thru Jesus Christ. And if it turns out that the Earth is old and God used evolution to any extent to do His creating...then God be praised! If God used evolution...*if He did*...nothing has changed. God is still the Creator of Heaven and Earth! We must not misuse the Biblical text to win an argument against evolution. That is what I suspect those who insist Genesis is literal about the days are doing. They do not think they are misusing it but I believe their understanding of it as literal is a flawed understanding.

My view is that the sorry condition of humanity is rooted in a whole lot more than godless evolution, although that idea certainly re-enforces our modern paganism. But our current decadence has much to do with increased materialism, the media, sexual license, and general depravity. Did all of those aspects increase because of godless evolution? Perhaps. But the turning point in American culture began in the early twentieth century with erosion in the belief that the Bible was and is the inerrant Word of God. Many factors played into that development, including the arrogance of academia in Europe where the very treatment of the Bible became increasingly shameful. The rise of Unitarianism and the leftover theological debris of Deism surely contributed. Increased industrialization and affluence led to a brave new world. All of that because evolution says God was not needed? Or is it possible that godless evolution has become the false religion of people who reject God for far deeper

reasons? Is it possible that they point to evolution as the explanation for their atheism when really their rejection of God goes way deeper? After all, people rejected the Gospel for centuries before Darwinism. It simply seems an oversimplification to reduce modern unbelief to evolution. In other words, belief in godless evolution might be the effect of unbelief as much as its cause.

I make no case for Darwin as a genuine Christian. I do not argue for evolution. But to be fair, let's go back and look at that poor fellow that all real Christians love to hate: Charles Darwin.

He was born in 1809 in England to a religious family. In his early years, Darwin planned to become a clergyman but his interest in science led him to the laboratory. The young Darwin saw the designs of nature as the gracious acts of a Divine source. His voyages in the 1830's aboard the HMS Beagle prompted him to develop his theory of natural selection. Visiting South America and the Galapagos Islands, Darwin became convinced that all living creatures were descended from a small handful of ancestors. These ideas raised some controversy, but they did not receive universal condemnation. In fact, his church did not condemn him. Darwin was actually buried in Westminster Abbey when he died at the age of 73.

Both Christians and non-believers would do well to be a little more tentative about Darwin himself. It is possible that many who reject Darwin are needlessly harsh. In our day, Darwinism has become synonymous with a godless view of creation. It is true that many modern unbelievers say they believe in evolution and in Darwin's views. They say that all of creation came together by chance and that there is no God or Creator to whom we owe our worship and adoration. But most Christians who equate all evolutionary theories with Darwinism do not realize that Darwin himself may have felt quite differently. In fact, near the end of his famous book "The Origin of the Species", Darwin wrote about evolution this way:

**'There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one...'**  
[Quoted in The Language of God, Collins, p. 99]

Do not misunderstand. Again, I am not arguing in favor of evolution. I do not believe human beings came from apes. I am arguing that when Christians say Darwin was nothing more than a Godless atheist who wanted to undermine the Glory of God, they are probably wrong. He actually struggled his whole life with doubts about what his science was doing to his faith. He may have totally rejected God in the end. But at one point he described himself as a theist 'compelled to look to a First Cause' [p. 99].

But Darwin's ideas certainly did raise doubts at a time when the Bible's authority was being undermined worldwide. In Europe, as the twentieth century began, scholars were dismissing the Bible as a book filled with myths and something only children could believe. The fundamentalist movement in America in the early 1900's reacted by insisting on certain views of the Bible and nothing less. In part, it became a struggle between science and religion, and people like Galileo from four hundred years earlier would have just winced at some of the anger. It boiled over, one might say, in 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee.

In the early twentieth century, Tennessee had a law called the Butler Act, which forbade the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The legislators insisted that such teaching contradicted the creation account in Genesis. That, by the way, would have been news to many throughout the history of the church going all the way back to Augustine in the fifth century and earlier. Taking the six days literally as twenty-four hour periods was never universally accepted in the church. But the folks in Tennessee were determined to negate evolutionary thought. So, they made it illegal to even mention evolution. The *Scopes Trial* saw a young teacher named John Scopes found guilty of teaching evolution in his public school classroom.

Eventually Scopes was fined a hundred dollars not for what he taught but for breaking the law in teaching it. But the lines were drawn and the impression remains with many modern Christians that you cannot believe in God and evolution. Many of those who believe that today would be shocked to learn of those who are Christians *and* believe in evolution. The great Presbyterian theologian B.B. Warfield was a theistic evolutionist. He said evolution was '...a theory of the method of Divine providence' [Collins, p. 98]. For Warfield, if God did His creating thru evolution, that was fine. Warfield would be just one among many I could name. But what is important is this: the Bible-believing church remains strangely uncomfortable with science, and I suspect that it needs to re-visit some of its assumptions.

A fine example of a committed Christian who believes that God used evolution to create His world is Dr. Darrel Falk. He is a born-again Christian and a biology Professor at Point Loma Nazarene College in California. Falk suggests that much of the evangelical church is hopelessly out of touch with the weakness of its witness to a scientific culture. We are so concerned to express our contempt for evolution that we have created an impression upon many people that opening the Bible to see what it says is a waste of time...unless the reader first denounces evolution and swears to believe in a literal six-day, twenty-four hour creation period. When it comes to being *missional* to much of our culture we are failing. Here is what Professor Falk says:

'A chasm is going to open up that will increasingly make Christianity inaccessible to individuals who believe in scientific investigation...as our young people go to college they will incorrectly perceive that they need to make a decision that is focused not so much on whether to pick up their cross and follow Jesus but on whether astronomy, astrophysics, nuclear physics, geology and biology are all wrong...there is a real danger that a substantial number of churches in evangelical Christianity are constructing isolated islands for themselves - islands that are separated from the world of science...' [Coming to Peace with Science, Falk p. 25].

We would do well to consider Francis Bacon, who said: "A little science will drive a man away from God. A lot of science will bring him back to God." It is debatable as to Bacon's use of the word science. In his era, it was often presented to mean philosophical inquiry. But the point would be the same. Inquiry of any sort, scientific, metaphysical or theological should not be feared but encouraged! God can bless the sincere inquirer!

If we mean business with the Gospel in presenting it to a scientific world, we must get over our defensiveness about our views of the Bible and engage this culture! Some of the evangelical church has managed to say to the culture, **'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and 144 hours of creation and a young Earth and you will be saved!'** We must be careful not to add to the Gospel.

The easiest thing in the world for the born-again Christian to do is find a church that has absolutely everything all figured out and where no questions are allowed. But if we really want to be missions-minded, we have to be willing to examine our own certainties.

The main assumption is that science is out to disprove God. In fact, the mission the modern evangelical church must address is the perception of today's scientific generation. As a group, they tend to see us as narrow-minded fundamentalists who still insist that the Earth is flat. They do not understand that our motive is to correct those who would dismiss the great and glorious God!

That is the mistake of the Godless. At the same time, I think some in the evangelical church have embraced an unwise strategy: insist that the creation was literally a matter of 144 hours and you defeat evolution. Again, in my view, that is the wrong way to interpret Genesis and only adds to the tension with modern science. The church should rejoice over science! It is modern science that shows us planet Earth, alone among billions of others that can sustain life as we know it. Modern science affirms that this green planet is precisely where it is in order to be a home for mankind. Modern science, in the hands of Godly men and women and even in the hands of those who don't



believe.... exalts God's Lordship over His creation! It was Isaac Newton, considered the greatest of the early scientists, and a strong Christian, who said: 'This most beautiful system of sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.' [The Soul of Science, Percy and Thaxton, p. 91].

So, Leah...those are my thoughts. I hope you will read the following outline of my views of the creation narratives in Genesis. Keep inquiring Leah!"

Let's consider the creation narratives as found in Genesis. Chapter One has 31 verses covering the six days of creation. All of this culminates in the creation of Adam. Genesis Two matters also! A brief study...

Genesis 1:1-2 (NIV) <sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

There was nothing! God's Holy Spirit actually "hovered" over the waters. So, we see that the building block of life was actually the first created thing: water. Then God acted and the writer of Genesis divides His actions in creation into six days:

Genesis 1:3-5 (NIV) <sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good....And there was evening, and there was morning--the first day.

Genesis 1:6-8 (NIV) <sup>6</sup> And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water... <sup>8</sup> God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning-- the second day.

Genesis 1:11-13 (NIV) <sup>11</sup> Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds....<sup>3</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning--the third day.

Genesis 1:14-16 (NIV) <sup>14</sup> And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night...<sup>16</sup> God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. Genesis 1:19 (NIV) <sup>19</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day.

Genesis 1:20-21 (NIV) <sup>20</sup> And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the Earth across the expanse of the sky." <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:23 (NIV) <sup>23</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning--the fifth day.

Genesis 1:26 (NIV) <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the Earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:31 (NIV) <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV) <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The **FIRST WAY** of looking at all of this is to simply say it is "**LITERAL.**" That it all took place over 144 hours, except for the seventh day, and thus the world cannot be older than a few thousand years. Those who say this arrive at their view by adding up the genealogies found later in the Old Testament and adding in the six days. Thus, literalists consider it a simple matter of a supernatural God doing supernatural things in the order that He chose. In this literal view, God is seen as simply "snapping" things into existence without any ordinary processes. As if He walked thru His creation and said "Pine Trees!" "Turtles!" "Man!" If the days were only six in number and twenty four hours long, that would have been the only way God could have created.

Church history does show us some theological greats who thought the days were simply twenty-four hours. Some think that Aquinas, Calvin, Luther and others held this view. And the literal view *is consistent* with the grammatical structure of the sequence that is usually used literally elsewhere in the Old Testament. If it could be proven unequivocally that the "days" were literal twenty-four hour days, that would put the lie to evolution once and for all. As I've said, I suspect that is why so many conservative Christians collect all of the arguments they can find for taking the six days literally. And there are some good arguments.

A **SECOND WAY** of looking at this is called the "**DAY-AGE**" View. In this interpretation, the days are not seen as literally twenty-four hours but as representing long periods of time. Many in church history considered the days as a way of outlining long periods. The advantage to this view is that it fits more readily with life on Earth as we know it. Things do develop over time periods. Everything from a nine-month pregnancy to a small pine tree that grows tall in ten years. The **DAY-AGE** view allows for figurative language but does not feel comfortable with the possibility of a long Earth history.

Thus, these first two views are commonly found among a group known as "Young-Earth" advocates. So, when modern science suggests the Earth is 4.5 billion years old and that man has been on the Earth a million years, they quickly dismiss such numbers as impossible. But again, they are basing that dismissal on a view of Genesis that allows at most for long time periods of creation but not millions or billions of years.

The **THIRD WAY** of looking at the Genesis text is the "**FRAMEWORK**" View. This interpretation sees the language of Genesis 1:1 thru Genesis 2:3 as figurative language designed to teach theological truths and unconcerned with scientific precision. The **FRAMEWORK** interpretation sees the six days as "Photographs" in a photo album. Rather than see the days as a movie of sorts, it says the days are more like "snapshots" of God's creative actions. They are more concerned with God's planned design than they are with the scientific details. I do not think the days of Genesis were likely meant by Moses to mean twenty-four hour days. *I think the **FRAMEWORK VIEW** is the best choice and I will now tell you why.*

**FIRST, THE USE OF THE WORD "DAY" IN GENESIS**, as we've said, must be examined in light of its use throughout the Bible. It is usually used to mean a literal twenty-four hour day but it is also used figuratively as in the Day of the Lord in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 13:9 (NASB) <sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.**

**SECOND, THE DAYS OF GENESIS ARE NOT SEQUENTIAL.** In fact, light is not even introduced until the fourth day. It's pretty hard to say they mean literal days without the Sun and Moon in existence until the fourth day. It is true that God could have provided the light and perhaps He did of course. But then the meaning of "day" is re-defined if we are talking about days without sunrises and sunsets.

**THIRD, THE DAYS LINE UP IN A THEOLOGICAL FASHION** if we look closely. The themes are connected between days one and four, days two and five, and days three and six. In One and Four, we see LIGHT: in Day One God says "Let there be light" and in Day Four He makes the Sun and Moon. In other words, Day Four is recapitulation or a detailing of Day One.

The same thing with Days Two and Five. In Day Two, God says "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water..." And God called that expanse "sky." In Day Five, we see both sea creatures and winged creatures filling these two spheres. So Day Five is detailing Day Two.

Finally, in Day Three we see "Seed-bearing plants" for food and in Day Six we see land animals and man. This pattern shows us, in a sense, "Kingdoms" and "Kings." The Kingdom of light is ruled by the Sun and the Moon. The Kingdom of Sky and Seas is ruled by the Birds and Sea Creatures. The Kingdom of Land is ruled by the Animals and Man. Then, on DAY SEVEN God rests from His creative labors satisfied that His creation is set in place. Sin has not yet entered in and Paradise is established. In short, I think we have in these early portions of Genesis a marvelous piece of Divine figurative poetry that tells us how God ordered things. These verses ring far more true of theological truth than scientific details.

**FOURTH AND PERHAPS MOST COMPELLING IS AN OVERLOOKED VERSE FOUND IN GENESIS CHAPTER TWO THAT STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT THE DIVINE WRITER WAS NOT THINKING OF TWENTY-FOUR HOUR DAYS.** This gets a little complicated so please focus in. We read:

**Genesis 2:4-5 (NIV) <sup>4</sup> This is the account of the heavens and the Earth when they were created. When the Lord God made the Earth and the heavens-- <sup>5</sup> and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the Earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the Earth and there was no man to work the ground...**

This again is a recapitulation referring back to the material preceding it. But notice how the writer refers to an ordinary, everyday process when he explains why there were no shrubs or vegetation in the fields. ***Because it had not rained!*** And since man had not been created, there was no one to arrange for irrigation from the ground water.

To repeat, literalists seem to believe that God simply snapped everything into existence in a moment. In creative bursts, God said "Trees!" or "Sheep" and eventually "Adam!" For the literalist, the six twenty-four hour days mean that everything God created He must have created instantaneously. But if that were

true, why would Moses bother to point out that low pressure and clouds had not formed to bring rain and then grasses? *This verse informs us that Moses in his writing was not talking at all about God simply creating in a moment.* If he was, this comment would not make any sense. Clearly, this statement in Genesis 2:5 refers back to Day Three when vegetation was created thru unhurried processes.

Notice please, this lack of rain and vegetation happened before Adam was created. That means it happened somewhere inside of the six days. In other words, Moses' words require that the days not be literally twenty-four hours or commenting on the process of cloud formation and rain and vegetation would be absurd. Moses is referring to the same kind of process that we observe! If God was simply snapping things into existence, He would have created vegetation in a moment. So...I think Moses would say "I was not thinking of twenty-four hour days but creation understood as God's intended pattern!"

Thus, I believe the days of Genesis are a framework for theological truth and were never meant to be understood as literal twenty-four hour days. I may be wrong. If I am right, this would not prove or disprove evolution. I am simply saying those who oppose any form of godless evolution really should not make their argument from Genesis. And we can say to the science-minded person who needs Christ, "Don't let the creation passages deter you. They may be read as theology and not precise science. Just look to the Bible for what it says about your soul...and come to Christ who alone can save you!" And we Christians should remember that Paul glorified God not by insisting on twenty-four hour days in Genesis, but by saying:

**Romans 1:19-20 (ESV) <sup>19</sup>" For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> 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."**

It is important that we bring great humility to these ruminations. There are simply many things we cannot know with certainty. In this regard, a strong Christian friend said to me, "OK. Suppose you're right. Suppose the days were not literally six twenty-four hour days. OK...then... how long *did* the creation take?" My reply was simply "I have no idea. Why do we have to know that? Why can't we leave such things hidden in the secret counsels of God?" My point was that not knowing is acceptable. Uncertainty can be a wiser position than attempting to force an unlikely viewpoint on the church and on a scientific world.

Finally, I'll share a thought about "attitude." It is a very disturbing reality that some Christians accuse other Christians of not believing the Bible is the Word of God. Why? Because those other Christians simply understand a passage differently. I've even heard of unpleasant exchanges whereby a "Young Earth" believer will say, "Well! *My God* can make the whole Earth and everything else in six twenty-four hour days!" But that is not the issue. So can mine! The person who believes that God created the Earth and its inhabitants over a much longer time period also believes that God could have done so in six twenty-four hour days. We have no doubt about His almighty power! We simply think He created over a long period and that he did not mean to say otherwise in the figurative literature of Genesis 1.1-2.5

In summary, I believe that the Genesis creation account is figurative literature, and was never meant to be received as literal, sequential and scientific data. Thus, when science overwhelmingly concludes that the Earth is billions of years old, I have no problem with their assertion. Clearly God could have made the Earth and its inhabitants in a moment if He chose to! But I believe He did it over billions of years. I could be wrong. But in any case, Christians who claim allegiance to the Bible as the Word of God would do well, on all sides, to remember the maxim "In all things *CHARITY!*"