

“Bible Doctrine”: Wayne Grudem
7. Creation; Notes: Pastor Keith McMinn

I. Explanation and Scriptural Basis

Doctrine of Creation: “God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself.” (Grudem, p. 147)

A. God Created the Universe Out of Nothing

1. Biblical evidence for creation out of nothing

- “ex nihilo” latin phrase meaning “out of nothing”
- “This means that before God began to create the universe, nothing else existed except God himself.” (Grudem, p. 147)
- *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1)
- *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host....For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.* (Psalm 33:6, 9)
- *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* (John 1:3)
- *By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* (Colossians 1:16)
- *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* (Hebrews 11:3)
- “Because God created the entire universe out of nothing, no matter in the universe is eternal. All that we see—the mountains, the oceans, the stars, the earth itself—all came into existence when God created them. This reminds us that God rules over all the universe and that nothing in creation is to be worshiped instead of God or in addition to him.” (Grudem, p. 148)

2. The direct creation of Adam and Eve

- *The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* (Genesis 2:7)
- *This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.* (Genesis 2:23)

- "...when Scripture says that the Lord "formed the man of dust from the ground," it does not seem possible to understand that to mean that he did it over a process that took millions of years and employed the random development of thousands of increasingly complex organisms." (Grudem, p. 149)
- *For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.* (I Corinthians 11:8-9)

3. The work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in creation

- "God the Father was the primary agent in initiating the act of creation." (Grudem, p. 149)
- *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* (John 1:3)
- *There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.* (I Corinthians 8:6)
- *All things were created through him and for him.* (Colossians 1:16)
- *The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* (Genesis 1:2)
- *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.* (Job 33:4)

B. Creation Is Distinct from God Yet Always Dependent on God

- "The Bible teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for he has made it and rules over it." (Grudem, p. 150)
- Transcendent: God is far "above" the creation in the sense that he is greater than the creation and he is independent of it.
- Immanent: God is "remaining in" creation; God is involved in creation. Creation depends upon God "for its existence and functioning"
- *Nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.... For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."* (Acts 17: 25, 28)
- *One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* (Ephesians 4:6)

- Materialism: 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.” (Grudem, p. 151)
- Pantheism: Everything, the whole universe, is God, or is part of God.
- Pantheism denies God has a distinct personality, that God is no longer unchanging, and that God is holy, because the evil in the universe is considered part of God.
- Dualism: Both God and the material universe have eternally existed side by side.
- Dualism leads to the question, “Will God ultimately triumph over evil in the universe? We cannot be sure, because both God and evil have apparently always existed side by side.” Furthermore, “this viewpoint would also deny that all of the universe was created inherently good and would encourage people to view material reality as somewhat evil in itself, in contrast with a genuine biblical account of a creation that God made to be good and that he rules over for his purposes.” (Grudem, p. 152)
- “When non-Christians today begin to be aware of a spiritual aspect to the universe, they often become dualists, merely acknowledging that there are good and evil aspects to the supernatural or spiritual world.” (Grudem, p. 153)
- Deism: God is not now directly involved in the creation.

C. God Created the Universe to Show His Glory

- *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)*
- *Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Revelation 4:11)*
- “Primarily it shows his great power and wisdom, far above anything that could be imagined by any creature. ... Who could make all of this? Who could make it out of nothing? Who could sustain it day after day for endless years? Such infinite power, such intricate skill, is completely beyond our comprehension. When we meditate on it, we give glory to God.” (Grudem, p. 154)
- *It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12)*

- "...we must affirm that the creation of the universe was a totally free act of God. It was not a necessary act but something that God chose to do." (Grudem, p. 154)
- Our delight in creativity is an imitation of our Creator.
- "...we reflect in small measure the creative activity of God, and we should delight in it and thank him for it." (Grudem, p. 155)

D. The Universe God Created Was "Very Good"

- *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.* (Genesis 1:31)
- *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.* (I Timothy 4:4-5)
- *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* (I Timothy 6:17)

E. The Relationship Between Scripture and the Findings of Modern Science

1. When all the facts are rightly understood, there will be "no final conflict" between Scripture and natural science.

- Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict*, offers several areas of consideration for disagreement among Christians:
 - There is a possibility that God created a "grown-up" universe.
 - There is a possibility of a break between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 or between 1:2 and 1:3.
 - There is a possibility of a long day in Genesis 1.
 - There is a possibility that the flood affected the geological data.
 - The use of the word "kinds" in Genesis 1 may be quite broad.
 - There is a possibility of the death of animals before the fall.
 - Where the Hebrew word *bara'* is not used, there is a possibility of sequence from previously existing things.
- "Schaeffer's major point, is that in both our understanding of the natural world and our understanding of Scripture, our knowledge is not perfect. ... God, who speaks in Scripture, knows all facts, and he has not spoken in a way that would contradict any true fact in the universe." (Grudem, p. 157)
- "Christians 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." (Grudem, p. 157)

- *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)*

2. Purely secular theories about creation are clearly inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture.

- “A *secular* theory is any theory of the origin of the universe and the origin of life that does not see an infinite, personal God as responsible for creating the universe by intelligent design.” (Grudem, pg. 157-158)

3. Scientific objections to the Darwinian theory of evolution

- Microevolution: small developments within one species, so that we see flies or mosquitos becoming immune to insecticides, human beings growing taller, etc.
- Macroevolution: general theory of evolution; a simple, one-cell life spontaneously was produced due to a mix of chemicals present on earth from which all complex life forms on earth developed through a process of random mutation and natural selection.

a. Evolution has no power to create new genetic information.

- “Random mutation and natural selection...do not contain the creative power to generate the new genetic information that is necessary for the creation of new proteins and new forms of life.” (Grudem, pg. 159)

b. Human intuition correctly recognizes that evolution is impossible.

- Douglas Axe, molecular biologist: “For accidental causes to have invented life is impossible in the same way that a cat writing an essay is impossible: we can be fully confident that neither has ever happened or will ever happen.” (Grudem, pg. 161)

c. Nonliving matter does not contain and cannot produce the information necessary for life.

- “Our conclusion must be that it is impossible for the nonliving raw materials found in nature to have created the information necessary for any living organism. The information is so complex and so vast that it must have come from elsewhere, from an intelligent cause of the information.” (Grudem, pg. 162)

d. Creating new life forms would require more changes than just mutations in DNA.

e. Embryo development requires the coordinated activity of thousands of genes.

- “The development from an embryo to a fully formed body is an extremely complex process that requires the precise coordination of multiple factors.” (Grudem, pg. 163)

f. The “irreducible complexity” of the living cell defies an evolutionary explanation.

- “In 1996, biology professor Michael Behe published *Darwin’s Black Box* which argued that several parts of the cell contain systems that are “irreducibly complex.” ... ‘An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly . . . by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.’” (Grudem, pg. 163)

g. Similarities in structure and appearance are better understood as evidence for the same designer than as evidence for the same ancestor.

h. The genetic diversity in the human race could have arisen from one original couple.

i. Believing anything but the Bible

4. Theistic evolution is inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture.

a. Definition of theistic evolution from editors of *Theistic Evolution*: “*God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly to cause any empirically detectable change in the natural behavior of matter until all living things had evolved by purely natural processes.*” (Grudem, pg. 165)

b. Theistic evolution confuses creation with providence.

- “Regarding the distinction between creation and providence, the narrative of God’s creative activity in Genesis 1-2 gives overwhelming evidence that God’s work of creation was fundamentally different from his *providential* work of preserving creation and maintaining its properties today.” (Grudem, pg. 166)

c. Theistic evolution denies several events in Genesis 1-3.

(1) Theistic evolution claims that Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and perhaps Adam and Eve never existed).

- *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (Genesis 1:27)

(2) Theistic evolution claims that God did not act directly or specially to create Adam out of dust from the ground.

- *Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)*

(3) Theistic evolution claims that God did not directly create Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side.

- *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:21-23)*

(4) Theistic evolution claims that Adam and Eve did not commit the first human sins, for human beings were doing morally evil things long before Adam and Eve.

- *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)*

(5) Theistic evolution claims that human death did not begin as a result of Adam's sin, for, in that view, human beings existed long before Adam and Eve, and those pre-Adamic humans were always subject to death.

- *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)*

(6) Theistic evolution claims that God did not "rest" from his work of creation or stop any special creative activity after plants, animals, and human beings appeared on the earth.

- "Theistic evolution holds that, after the initial creation of matter, God did not act to change the behavior of matter in the universe to create any living things." (Gurdem, pg. 168)

d. Theistic evolution denies that Genesis 1-3 is a historical narrative.

- "No Bible translation known to me presents the entirety of Genesis 1-3 as poetry, using relatively short lines, one after another, and showing evident

parallelism in succeeding sets of balanced lines. ... It is written as a narrative of historical events.” (Grudem, pg. 168)

e. Theistic evolution undermines the historical trustworthiness of ten books of the New Testament.

- “Ten books of the New Testament affirm the historicity of the events recorded in Genesis 1-3. ... Thus, theistic evolution requires us to believe that both Jesus and the authors of ten New Testament books were wrong in their affirmations of the historical reliability of many details in Genesis 1-3.” (Grudem, pg. 169)

f. Theistic evolution denies the ability of the Bible to teach us about vast areas of human knowledge.

- “Proponents of theistic evolution are claiming, in essence, that there are whole areas of human knowledge about which they will not allow the Bible to speak with authority.” (Grudem, pg. 170)

g. Theistic evolution nullifies the overwhelming evidence in nature for God’s existence.

- “While the Bible says that *everything* in nature bears witness to God, theistic evolution says *no living creature* in nature bears witness to God. When an unbeliever is confronted with the wondrous complexity of living things, theistic evolution allows him just to think that random mutations produce surprising results, and therefore he has no need for any thought of God.” (Grudem, pg. 170)

h. Theistic evolution undermines several other important Christian doctrines. (Grudem, pg. 170-171)

- (1) **The goodness of God** According to theistic evolution, the earth and its present state is the best kind of earth God could create. By contrast, on a traditional view of Genesis 1-3, the blame for natural evil in the world belongs to Adam and Eve, not God.
- (2) **The moral justice of God** According to theistic evolution, the earliest human beings that were somehow “created” by God’s use of evolution were sinful human beings ... But if that is the case, it is hard to escape the conclusion that God himself is responsible for human sin, for he never created sinless human beings who were able to obey him and not to sin.

(3) The atonement. If we deny that sin came into the world through Adam, then the parallel with the unity of the redeemed who are represented by Christ does not work.

(4) The resurrection Theistic evolution undermines the effectiveness of the resurrection to give new life to all who are saved by Christ.

i. Conclusion

- “Theistic evolution, as defined by its most respected defenders today, implies a denial of specific events that are recorded in Genesis 1-3. ... In sum, belief in theistic evolution is incompatible with the truthfulness of the Bible and with several crucial doctrines of the Christian faith. My conclusion is that theistic evolution should not be considered a legitimate option that Bible-believing Christians, and especially Christian leaders, may hold today.” (Grudem, pg. 171)

5. The destructive influences of evolutionary theory in modern thought.

F. The Age of the Earth

- “It is important to keep these things in mind because there is a danger that Christians will spend too much time arguing over the age of the earth and neglect to focus on much more important and much clearer aspects of the overall teaching of the Bible on creation.” (Grudem, pg. 172)
- Old Earth: Agrees with consensus of modern science that the earth is 4,500,000,000 years old.
- Young Earth: Says the earth is 10,000 or perhaps 20,000 years old, and that secular scientific dating schemes are incorrect.

1. There are gaps in the genealogies of the Bible.

- “Scripture itself indicates the fact that the genealogies list only those names the biblical writers thought it important to record for their purposes.” (Grudem, pg. 172)

2. What about dinosaurs?

3. Both old earth and young earth interpretations of the Bible are valid options for Christians today.

a. Old earth theories of creation

- (1) Day-age view (or a “concordist” view).**
- (2) The view that there are long periods of time between the twenty-four-hour days.**
- (3) “Analogical days” view.**

(4) Literary framework view.

b. “Young earth” theories of creation

(1) Creation with an appearance of age (mature creationism)

(2) Flood geology

4. Conclusions on the age of the earth: both views are acceptable.

5. The way forward

G. Application

Review Questions

1. Define the *doctrine of creation*.
2. *Ex nihilo* is Latin for:
 - a. out of something
 - b. by word
 - c. without error
 - d. out of nothing
3. Fill in the blanks: Creation is _____ from God yet always _____ on God.
4. Define both *transcendent* and *immanent*.
5. How does the biblical account of creation refute pantheism?
6. Creation primarily show us:
 - a. God’s care for his people
 - b. God’s glory
 - c. God’s creativity
 - d. God’s specificity
7. True/False: When all the facts are rightly understood, there will inevitably be conflict between Scripture and natural science.
8. What are some of the different ways the word “evolution” is used?
9. Define *theistic evolution*. How is it different from the biblical teaching regarding creation?
10. True/False: There are gaps in biblical genealogies.
11. Explain the day-age or “concordist” view. How is its approach different from the literary framework view?
12. Read the creation account in Genesis 1-2. What are some things that you learn about God’s act of creation, particularly of Adam and Eve?
13. Reread Genesis 1. Which aspects of this chapter support the young earth view? Which aspects support the old earth view?
14. In what ways do you reflect the creative nature of God in your own life? Thank God for this way to praise him!
15. Has the theory of evolution posed an issue for you in regard to your belief in a creator God? How has this chapter helped you in your faith in the teaching of the Bible regarding creation?
16. How should a right understanding of creation help your worship of God?