

Scientific Evidence Pertinent to the Origin and Evolution of Biological Complexity

Today we come to our summary and conclusion of our hermeneutical section on the exploration of creation and evolutionary theory. I think you can see from the various biblical interpretations of Genesis 1 that we've surveyed that there's quite a range of alternatives available to Bible-believing Christians which have been advanced by evangelical scholars. It's not the case that we are forced or boxed into just one interpretation that is valid and binding for anyone who is a Bible-believing Christian. There's quite a number of possible interpretations of Genesis.

Now, you might say to me, then which of these interpretations is the best, if any of them? Here, I think that questions of literary genre are paramount. Just this week I was reading an article by the Old Testament scholar Andrew Judd entitled “Genres in the Bible: Keys to Unlocking the Text,” *Think* (Spring 2025). He writes,

Genre is especially important when reading the Bible. The Bible is a library of books spanning different languages, cultures, historical periods, and, of course, myriad genres. We have songs, sagas, genealogies, historical accounts, novellas, proverbs, apocalypses, letters, lawsuits, erotic poetry, fables, war reports, biographies, parables, and even cooking recipes (see Exodus 30:22). The conventions for each biblical genre vary widely and have a big influence on the way we interpret the Bible.

I find the mytho-historical interpretation to provide the best genre analysis of Genesis 1-11 for the reasons that I've shared and therefore to be the best interpretation. But I want to emphasize that I present this view merely as a plausible alternative for your consideration. We can, and we should be, open to various options.

Now we want to turn to a consideration of the scientific evidence pertinent to the origin and evolution of biological complexity. As we do so, it's important to remember that our concern here is not – is not! – to present some sort of design argument for the existence of God or indeed any kind of intelligent designer. We're not doing natural theology. Here we are doing systematic theology; that is to say, we're asking: Given the truth of the divine revelation in the Bible, how is the scientific evidence concerning the origin and evolution of biological complexity to be integrated with our theology? So ours is an integrative project beginning with the truths of theology and then asking how the data of modern science can best be integrated with it.

From what I've already said, I think it's evident that unless one adopts the literal Young Earth Creationist interpretation, Genesis 1 doesn't really say anything about how God created life on Earth. The Genesis account doesn't really explain anything about the mechanisms by which God created. In fact, in two places, as we've seen, the account says that God declared, “Let the *Earth* bring forth” (in one case vegetation and in the other case terrestrial animals), suggesting that there may indeed be natural causes in bringing these things forth. So it seems to me that unless we adopt the Young Earth Creationist’s literal interpretation, there is no

incompatibility between Genesis 1 and scientific theories about the origin and evolution of life.

If we do adopt the Young Earth Creationist interpretation, then it seems we have no choice but to radically revise the doctrine of inspiration so that the text either (1) is consistent with teaching error – that though inspired, the Scriptures teach error, or (2) we could say that whatever the personal beliefs of the authors, the antiquated science and history in Scripture is not part of the teaching of Scripture, so that Scripture is not in error in what it teaches but rather doesn't teach the antiquated science and history that is found in Genesis 1-11. For Young Earth Creationism is not merely incompatible with evolutionary biology; rather, as creation scientists themselves recognize, Young Earth Creationism is in massive conflict with modern science, history, and linguistics. They therefore have to propose an utterly different alternative science and history that is frequently bizarre. I don't want to dwell on the negatives in this class, but those of you who are tempted by creation science should understand just how wild it is. You need to look at it with open eyes. The idea that the universe is only six to ten thousand years old would not only force us to abandon modern geology, paleontology, archaeology, and dating techniques, but it would make it impossible for us even to see the stars at night, since light has not had sufficient time to travel from the stars to Earth. In order to explain a fact so simple as that we can see the stars at night Young Earth Creationists have had to propose implausible alternative cosmologies. For example, some have said that the universe is an expanding rotating ball of matter in empty space with our solar system located at its center. Now, never mind that such a model fails to deliver on its promises of how we can see

starlight coming from galaxies that are billions of light years away, the more fundamental point that I'm making is that Young Earth Creationists, in order to explain a phenomenon so simple as that you can see the stars at night, are forced to revamp the entire universe. It doesn't just stop there. Take, for example, the attempt to explain away the Earth's sedimentation on the basis of so-called flood geology – Noah's Flood. The idea that there was ever in human history a worldwide flood that destroyed all terrestrial life on Earth and laid down the Earth's sediments is a fantasy. For a devastating critique of flood geology I would just commend to you Hugh Ross' *Navigating Genesis*, in which he has a chapter devoted to a scientific critique of flood geology.

Just how bizarre Young Earth Creationism is becomes evident from reading Jonathan Sarfati's Young Earth Creationist commentary on Genesis 1-11. Sarfati thinks that after the flood the animals that Noah had taken on board disembarked and then filled the entire world. Now, how do you suppose that the hippopotami on board made it from the mountains of Turkey where the ark landed to the rivers of Central Africa or how the little koala bears and platypuses crawled all the way from Turkey to Australia or the sloths to South America? Well, Sarfati's answer is that plate tectonics had not yet separated the one supercontinent into the world's separate continents, thus enabling the animals to migrate to their various habitats. But they had to do it in a hurry! For all the continental drift and mountain building, such as the raising of Mount Everest, all supposedly took place since the flood just a few thousand years ago. What about the dinosaurs, you might ask? Well, since they were contemporaneous with Noah, he must have taken them on board the ark, too. Sarfati solves the problem of sufficient room on

board by suggesting that Noah took juvenile specimens – two of every genus (not two of every species; two of every genus). Now, since there were at least 500 dinosaur genera, Noah must have had at least a thousand dinosaurs on board the ark, which he then released into the world upon disembarkation. Just think about that for a minute. Only three hundred and sixty-seven years separate the Flood from the call of Abraham – three hundred sixty-seven years! That means that the history of dinosaur evolution and speciation plus extinction took place in less than four hundred years, unless we are to think that there were still dinosaurs roaming the Earth at the time of Abraham. Truly, Young Earth Creationists live in a different universe than most of us do. This is frankly crank science, and Christians should not be attracted to it.

Leaving aside Young Earth Creationism, there is on other interpretations no incompatibility between Genesis 1 and scientific theories about the origin and evolution of life.