

Why Do They Believe That? The Age of the Earth

Biological evolution and the age of the earth and universe are *distinct* issues. Biological evolution concerns how *living things* got here. The debate over the age of the earth concerns how *stars and planets* got here. Many Christians who reject biological evolution as the process by which living things got here accept the standard scientific explanation and dates for how stars and planets formed. This page focuses on how stars and planets formed.

All Christians agree that God made everything. However, they disagree about how and when he did so, and about how essential these questions are to faith. This means that all Christian positions believe that the Bible is true and that the natural world is God's creation, but they interpret one or both of them differently. Read the following two statements and consider which you think a Young Earth Creationist (YEC), an Old Earth Creationist (OEC) and an Evolutionary Creationist (EC) are most likely to agree with.

- The Bible is clear about how and when God created the stars and planets; scientific evidence that seems to indicate otherwise is being misunderstood.
- The scientific evidence is clear about how and when God created the stars and planets; biblical evidence that seems to indicate otherwise is being misunderstood.

Now check your thoughts against the following descriptions of possible positions:

Young-Earth Creationist View

Genesis chapter one enumerates the creation days (1st, 2nd, 3rd ...) and specifically delineates them with "evening and morning." This describes a normal week of 24-hour days. Since Adam was made during the first week of Earth's existence, using Bible genealogies to count back to Adam gives a creation date of roughly 4000 BC. Adding some time for gaps that everyone agrees are in the genealogies produces a creation date of perhaps 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. God's method of creation was *speaking* things into existence, fully formed and functional. The stars and planets were formed by miracle as God spoke them into existence.

Old-Earth Creationist View and Evolutionary Creationist View

Even before Darwin published his theory of evolution, accumulating evidence was convincing most scientists (many of whom were Christians) that Earth was ancient; by now the scientific evidence is clear. The Hebrew word for “day” (*yom*) used in Genesis chapter one can mean not only a 24 hour period, but a long period of time, just as we say in English, “in my grandfather’s day.” (Genesis 2:4 appears to use *yom* for the entire creation week; read it in the King James Version to see where “day” appears.) Finally, many conservative theologians argue that the days in Genesis 1 are primarily a poetic structure God used to communicate his main point: the building of a cosmic temple in which he would fellowship with his people. God’s method of creating the stars and planets was active use of natural processes, such as the gravitational collapse of gas and dust in space; we know this from scientific investigation. This amazing history, guided by God from the big bang and lasting billions of years, displays God’s glory.

Why Do They Believe That? Evolution

Biological evolution and the age of the Earth and universe are *distinct issues*. Many Christians who reject evolution as the process by which living things got here nonetheless accept the standard scientific dates for rocks, fossils, stars, etc. This page focuses on how God produced living things.

All Christians agree that God made everything. However, they disagree about how and when he did so, and about how essential these questions are to faith. This means that all Christian positions believe that the Bible is true and that the natural world is God’s creation, but they interpret one or both of them differently. Read the following three statements and decide which one(s) you think a Young Earth Creationist (YEC), an Old Earth Creationist (OEC) and an Evolutionary Creationist (EC) are most likely to agree with.

- The Bible clearly teaches that God made the major kinds of living things by special, miraculous creation; if we think science says otherwise we must have misinterpreted the evidence.
- The Bible clearly teaches that God is the author of all living things but it does not seek to teach us exactly how; God could have used natural processes.
- The scientific evidence is very clear that the different kinds of living things arose

through evolutionary processes; if we think the Bible says otherwise we must have misinterpreted it.

Now check your thoughts against the following descriptions of possible positions:

Young-Earth Creationist View and Old-Earth Creationist View

God created all living creatures. The Bible teaches that miracles are required to produce entirely new kinds of creatures. Processes understandable through genetics can explain minor variations within a basic type of creature—such as breeds of dog—but these processes cannot yield anything completely new. They will not produce the first birds from changes in small dinosaurs or the first whales from hooved land mammals. Scientific evidence has been misinterpreted as showing that such major changes occurred naturally.

Evolutionary Creationist View

God's glory shows in his having made a creation that produces—by his use of the processes he built into it—the living things he desires. The Bible is God's Word, humans are created in God's image, and God does miracles, but miracles are not the method by which God brought about the array of living things that we see in creation. God works through natural processes to produce large and small changes in living things – we see this from scientific investigation of these processes, and it is a misinterpretation to suggest that the Bible must reject these findings.