

The “Creationism vs. Evolution” Debate

Introduction

One of the most fundamental questions about nature is: “How did we get here”? In other words, how did we humans – as well as the plants and animals around us – come into existence?

In Western countries, there are two main systems that are used, to explain how, *exactly*, plants, animals and humans began their existence. Those two systems are called “creationism” and “evolution”.

Creationism states that God *explicitly* created each and every form of life on the earth. In other words, every plant or animal species that exists today was created by God, at some point in the past.

For example, creationism states that at one point in time God *explicitly* created a shark, at another point in time He created a turtle, and at a third point in time He created a hawk.

Note: creationism states that there can be “varieties” *within* a species. For example, there are many, *many* varieties of the dog species (*Canis lupus*) – compare the features of a Scottish Terrier to a Great Dane.

Evolution holds that plants and animals were not explicitly created – instead, every form of life emerged as a “variation” on a **previous** form of life. In other words, evolution states that each new form of life came about as a “new model” of an existing form of life – due to **mutations** in an organism’s DNA.

For example, evolution states that at one point in time, a strain of fish began encountering mutations in its DNA, which *eventually* (after many generations) gave its descendants the ability to breathe air and to move around on the earth. As a result, those mutations caused that strain of fish to become frogs. Similarly, at some later point in time, a strain of frogs began encountering mutations in its DNA, which eventually gave its descendants scaly skin and sharp teeth. Those mutations therefore caused those frogs to *become* lizards.

Five detailed explanations

As it turns out, there are several detailed explanations, about the evolution and creationism systems. In fact, there are (at least) *five* detailed explanations about how life appeared on the earth; and each of those explanations uses either evolution or creationism to explain that process. Those explanations are described below.

(Note: a third system, called “intelligent design”, also discusses the origin of life on the earth. Basically, intelligent design states that the *complexity* of nature – and the *patterns* that can be observed in it – make it clear that an “intelligent being” must have designed and built everything in nature. However, to my knowledge, intelligent design does *not* provide any detailed explanations about exactly **how** the process of life emerging happened; so it will not be discussed in this document.)

1. The “Random Chance Evolution” explanation:

This theory holds that all life on earth *evolved*, through mutations of existing organisms – *and* that all of those mutations were completely random. In other words, this theory states that God had absolutely

nothing to do, with any life emerging on the earth. (In fact, a great many proponents of this theory are actually atheists.)

This explanation states that the earth began as a completely lifeless planet; and it did not have any life on it for billions of years. At some point, however, a bolt of lightning (or something similar) struck one of the earth's oceans. That electricity then reacted with protein molecules in the water in *precisely the correct way*, to cause the formation of a single-celled organism – something like an amoeba.

Then, over the course of millions of years, completely *random* mutations in those single-celled organisms eventually brought about the formation of multi-celled organisms. Additional random mutations led to the formation of primitive invertebrates, which then led to fish, which led to amphibians, etc.

So, the bottom line for the “random chance evolution” explanation is this: All life emerged on earth, through a very long series of “lucky accidents”.

2. The “Deity-Directed Evolution” explanation:

This theory *also* holds that all life on the earth was brought about through evolution. In other words, this doctrine also states that every single form of life on earth came about, as a “mutated form” of a *previous* form of life.

However, this theory differs from the “random chance evolution” theory in one important respect: in this theory, God, Himself, actively “directed” the evolution process. That is, God *caused* the various stages of evolution to occur.

So, for example, this theory also states that the very *first* single-celled organism came about by a lightning bolt hitting the ocean. However, this theory states that God caused that lightning bolt to occur – rather than the lightning bolt being completely *random*. Similarly, this theory also holds that mutations caused fish to eventually become amphibians – but it states that God explicitly *caused* those mutations to occur, rather than the mutations being random.

Interestingly, this particular theory has been accepted by many mainstream Christians.

So, the bottom line for the “deity-directed evolution” explanation is this: God caused all life to appear on the earth – and the *mechanism* that He used to do that is evolution.

3. The “Six Literal Day Creation” explanation:

This doctrine states that God explicitly created every form of life on the earth. In other words, each and every plant and animal was brought about by a creative act of God – i.e., there are no forms of life that arose from mutations of previous forms of life.

In addition, this doctrine takes the creation account listed in Genesis 1 very *literally*. In particular, when Genesis 1 uses the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning”, this doctrine states that that phrase refers to one *literal day* – i.e., 24 hours.

For example, Genesis 1:14-18 describes God's creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Then, Genesis 1:19 states that “there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day”. So, this doctrine states that God created the sun, the moon and the stars within one 24 hour period. Similarly, Genesis 1:20-22

describes God's creation of all of the sea creatures and birds on the earth. Then, Genesis 1:23 states that "there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day". As a result, this doctrine states that God created *all* aquatic and avian life on the earth, within one 24 hour period.

So, the bottom line of the "six literal day creation" explanation is this: God explicitly created each and every living thing on the earth (as well as the sun, moon, etc) – and He did it all within six literal days – i.e., 144 hours.

4. The "Six Figurative Day Creation" explanation:

This doctrine also holds that God explicitly created every form of life on the earth. However, this doctrine takes a much more "figurative" view of the terms used in Genesis 1.

Basically, this doctrine states that the phrase "there was evening and there was morning" – as well as the word "day" – do not necessarily mean a literal period of 24 hours. Instead, those terms can sometimes refer to a much, *much* longer period of time – sometimes extending many thousands (or millions) of years.

For example, as noted above, Genesis 1:14-18 describes God's creation of the sun, moon and stars; and Genesis 1:19 then concludes with: "there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day". According to this explanation, the phrase "there was evening and there was morning", and the word "day", are actually figurative – i.e., they refer to a period of time many thousands (or millions) of years in length.

So, the bottom line of the "six figurative day creation" explanation is this: God explicitly created every form of life on the earth (as well as the sun, moon, etc) – but He took hundreds of thousands of years to accomplish that task.

5. The "Gap Theory Creation" explanation:

This doctrine contains some elements of *both* of the above two doctrines. To begin with, this doctrine takes **particular** note of Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Here are those two verses, from the ESV:

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

This theory states that an enormous period of time took place, *between* those two verses. In other words, this doctrine claims that millions of years elapsed, between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

Basically, this doctrine states the following: during Genesis 1:1, God created the earth. However, it took hundreds of thousands (or millions) of years, for God to create the earth. So, the earth, itself, was not created in a literal 24 hour period.

In addition, God created the *dinosaurs*, during the "Genesis 1:1" period of time.

Then – **in between** Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 – there was a *rebellion* of some of God's angels. Basically, some of the angels – led by Satan – revolted against God; and the resulting "war" caused the earth to become desolate. In other words, that angelic war caused the earth to become "without form and void" – i.e., with no life upon the earth.

After the angelic rebellion, God began the process of **re-creating** life on the earth. That re-creation process is described in Genesis 1:3-31. Finally, this doctrine states that all of the creation activities in Genesis 1:3-31 are actually *literal* – i.e., all of the fish and birds were created within one 24 hour period.

So, the bottom line for this explanation is this: God created the earth, and every form of life in it. He took hundreds of thousands of years to create the earth itself, and to create the dinosaurs. However, He took six *literal* days to **re-create** life on the earth, after the angelic rebellion.

Are any of these beliefs supported by Scripture?

All of the above explanations are “interesting”, of course – but the more important question is: are any of those explanations supported by the Bible? In other words, do any of the above theories harmonize with the Scriptural account of creation?

First off, consider the “random chance evolution” theory. That theory states that all life emerged on the earth through completely random, undirected events – i.e., that God did not have *anything to do* with creation.

Of course, the idea that God did not have anything to do with creation is **directly** contradicted by Scripture:

Genesis 1:1 (ESV):

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Job 38:4 (ESV):

⁴“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.

Isaiah 44:24 (ESV):

²⁴Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
who formed you from the womb:
“I am the LORD, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who spread out the earth by myself

Basically, the “random chance evolution” theory tries to “explain away God” – i.e., it tries to completely *remove* God from creation entirely. Of course, Scripture explicitly states that God, Himself, created the entire universe – so as a result, the “random chance evolution” explanation is *diametrically opposed* to Scripture.

Next, consider the “deity-directed evolution” explanation. That theory states that God caused all life to emerge – but the *method* that He used to do that is evolution.

Initially, this theory *sounds* attractive – it seems to provide a way to “join” science and Scripture together. This is one reason why some Christian groups have accepted it.

However, when we look deeper into this explanation, some problems arise. As mentioned, according to evolution, every single form of life arose as a “mutated version” of a previous form of life. So, amphibians arose as mutations of fish, reptiles arose as mutations of amphibians, etc.

So, if we carry out that process all the way to the top of the “food chain”, we arrive at the following conclusion: *humans* arose as mutations of *apes*!

Not only that, but according to evolution, every new form of life starts off as an *offspring* of an existing form of life. For example, a mutated amphibian – which will become a reptile – must be the offspring of a “normal” amphibian. So, if evolution is true, that means that the very first humans must have been the offspring of apes.

In other words, according to evolution, **Adam** had a *mother* – and his mother was an ape!

So, let’s take a look in Scripture, to determine if Adam was actually the son of an ape:

Genesis 2:7 (KJV):

⁷And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

According to Scripture, Adam did not have a mother *at all* – instead, God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, and then filled his body with the breath of life. So, Adam did not even have a *human* mother – let alone an *ape* mother...

From the above information, it appears to me that both of the “evolution-based explanations” – i.e., explanations #1 and #2 – are explicitly *contradicted* by Scripture. As a result, I definitely do not accept either of those explanations for how life appeared on the earth.

Thoughts about the creation-based beliefs

All three of the remaining explanations are creationism-based. In other words, all of those explanations stated that God explicitly created each form of life – i.e., life did **not** evolve from previous life forms.

From what I can see, each of those three explanations has some positive points – and some negative points. In other words, I can acknowledge the arguments that are used to promote each of those explanations – but I am *not* completely convinced by any of them.

In other words, my mind is not “completely made up”, about explanations #3, #4 or #5 – unfortunately.

There are a number of items that are worth mentioning, about those three explanations. In other words, the items below are “food for thought”, about the plausibility of the three creation-based explanations.

The meaning of the word “day”

As noted above, the creation account in Genesis chapter 1 uses the following phrase, over and over again, after God completes a set of creative activity:

“And there was evening and there was morning, the <ordinal number> **day**.”

That phrase certainly seems to indicate that **literal** 24-hour days are being described. If that is true, then of course that would completely eliminate the plausibility of the “six *figurative* day” explanation.

However, in some cases, the word day can be used in a figurative sense. For example, we might use the phrase “In my grandfather’s **day**, things were much different.” Certainly, that use of the word “day” does not mean 24 hours – it means the period of time in which your grandfather lived.

In addition, Scripture contains some passages which state that God views the passage of time in a much different way than we do – and some of those passages actually use the word “day”. Consider these passages:

Psalms 90:4 (NIV):

⁴ A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.

2 Peter 3:8 (ESV):

⁸But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years,
and a thousand years as one day.

So, even Scripture itself has several different meanings of the word “day”.

Of course, in the Genesis 1 account, the word “day” is preceded by “there was evening and there was morning”. That phrase, when used with “day”, would definitely seem to indicate a 24 hour period.

However, let’s consider the words “evening” and “morning” for a moment. How do we determine when an evening ends, and when a morning begins? We use the sun, of course – when the sun sets, an evening ends; and when the sun rises, a morning begins.

The reason why that is important is because of the *order* of creation in Genesis 1. Consider this verse:

Genesis 1:16,18 (ESV):

¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

The above passage tells us that God *created* the sun (and the moon and stars) during the fourth day. In other words, the sun did **not exist at all**, during days 1, 2 and 3!

So, if the sun, itself, did not even exist, then the terms “evening” and “morning” do not have their “normal” meanings. For example, how can a normal “morning” begin, if there isn’t any sun to rise over the horizon? As a result, it certainly seems possible that the term “day” in Genesis 1 might **not** be a literal 24 hour period – especially for days 1 through 4.

Did dinosaurs ever co-exist with humans?

The “six literal day” doctrine states that God created **all** animal life forms that **ever** existed on the earth, during two *literal* days – days 5 and 6. If that is true, then of course that means that at one point in time, dinosaurs and humans were *both* living on the earth, concurrently. In other words, some humans lived at the *same time* as dinosaurs were living.

Most scientists would completely *mock* such an idea, of course. However, does Scripture give us *any* possibility that some humans lived at the same time as dinosaurs? Consider this passage, in which God talks to Job:

Job 40:15-18 (ESV):

¹⁵Behold, Behemoth,
which I made as I made you;
he eats grass like an ox.
¹⁶Behold, his strength in his loins,
and his power in the muscles of his belly.
¹⁷He makes his tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of his thighs are knit together.
¹⁸His bones are tubes of bronze,
his limbs like bars of iron.

Most mainstream groups believe that the “behemoth” listed was either a hippopotamus or a rhinoceros. However, that passage states that the tail of the behemoth is like a cedar – i.e., like a tree trunk. The hippo and the rhino do not have tails like tree trunks, though – they have tails like *ropes*.

Note, however, that a number of **dinosaurs** had tails that were extremely similar to tree trunks. For an interesting discussion on Job 40, see [this link](#).

Of course, even if the behemoth actually was a dinosaur, that does not *necessarily* mean that dinosaurs and humans co-existed. For example, God *could* have mentioned the behemoth to Job, even if the behemoth had already become *extinct* – hundreds of thousands of years before Job was born.

I tend to doubt that possibility, though – because in ancient times, people’s ability to store and retrieve information was rather limited. (There was no internet to gather information from in those days...) As a result, it seems unlikely to me that God would describe a creature in such painstaking detail to Job, *unless* Job was able to *see* a living representative of one of those creatures.

So, *if* the behemoth actually was a dinosaur, then it seems likely to me that that at least one member of that species was actually living at the time that God made that statement to Job.

Was there any life on earth, **before** the six days in Genesis?

The “gap theory” of creation states that during the Genesis 1:1 time frame, God created the dinosaurs on the earth. Given that many dinosaurs were plant eaters, that means that God must have created some plants on the earth for those dinosaurs to eat as well.

However, does Scripture give us any indication that there was any life on the earth, before the six days listed in Genesis 1? Consider this passage:

Genesis 2:5-9 (ESV):

⁵When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—⁷then 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. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

That passage certainly seems to indicate that there were **no** plants on the earth – at all – *until* the time that God created humans. If that is the case, then that would contradict the idea that any plants (and dinosaurs) lived in a completely *different* “creation time frame” than humans. In other words, it would seem to eliminate the possibility that some plants – and dinosaurs – lived in the world, *before* an angelic rebellion destroyed all life on the earth.

Of course, some people claim that the plants that are mentioned above are only “domesticated” plants – i.e., plants that humans must *explicitly* care for. However, some of the plants listed there are *trees* – and trees can survive without humans caring for them, right?

The final item to note on this issue is the concept of an “angelic rebellion”. The entire “gap theory” rests upon the idea that angels destroyed God’s *initial* creation – i.e., His creation of dinosaurs (and their plants). To my knowledge, the only explicit mention of an angelic rebellion is in the book of Revelation – and that rebellion definitely took place *after* God had created humans. Not only that, but that rebellion does not mention anything about all life on the earth being destroyed.

So, it is certainly *possible* that there was an angelic rebellion, which laid waste to the entire world – but I cannot find any explicit reference to one. As a result, I have a hard time placing definite credence into the “gap theory” explanation; since that entire explanation presupposes that just such a rebellion took place.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, the five explanations for how life appeared on the earth are all very interesting. However, from what I can see, explanations 1 and 2 are directly contradicted by Scripture; so I definitely do not believe that either of those theories hold water.

The other three explanations all look to have certain items in their favor, but also have other points which appear problematic. So, I have not been able to *definitively* make a choice among them yet.

Fortunately, I would say that determining the exact time frame that God used to create us is *not* a “salvation issue”. In other words, our eternal life does **not** depend upon us finding the correct choice between explanations 3, 4 and 5. The subject is definitely very interesting, however!