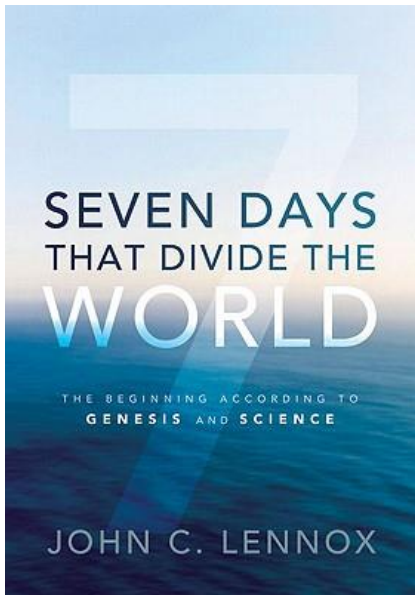


The Seven Days of Genesis: Summary of the book by Prof John Lennox.



Interpreting Genesis 1-3

What Genesis 1-2 clearly tells us:

1. God exists
2. God is the Eternal Creator
3. God is distinct from creation
4. God is personal
5. God is a fellowship
6. God has a goal in creation
7. God creates by his word
8. God is the source of light
9. The goodness of creation

“Gen 1:1–2:3 is a polemic against the religious concepts of the ancient Orient. God created the whole universe, by implication out of nothing, this is a rejection of the common notion that matter preexisted the gods’ work of creation. The concept of man here is markedly different from standard Near Eastern mythology: man was not created as the lackey of the gods to keep them supplied with food; he was God’s representative and ruler on earth, endowed by his creator with an abundant supply of food...” (Word Biblical Commentary)

Two General Views about the Age of the Universe/Earth

1. It is very, very old (Billions of years)
2. It is around 6000yo with the ‘days’ in Gen 1 normal 24hr days (Young-earth creationism)

Both these views have long histories. Martin Luther and John Calvin generally held to a literal 7 days while others such as the 1st century Jewish Philosopher, Philo saw creation as happening in an instant. Early church Fathers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, proposed that the days in Genesis could be long periods of time (‘a day like 1000 years: Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8) Augustine believed that the days described in Genesis were not like our ordinary days, and that God created everything in an instant.

3 General Views of the seven days of Genesis:

The 24-hour View	Seven 24 hour days of one earth week, 6000 years ago
The Day-age View	The days are in chronological order representing an unspecified length of time
The Framework View	The days exhibit a logical rather than chronological order

4 meanings of the word “day” (*yom*)

1. Gen 1:5 uses *yom* not denoting a 24hr day but *daylight* as contrasted with *night-time*.
2. Gen 1:5 uses *yom* a second time to mean a 24hr day (morning and evening)
3. The use of *yom* on the seventh day is different from the others in that it is not qualified by the phrase “evening and morning”. On the seventh day God rested, but the sense is that the day continues; that is, it refers to an age or an epoch of time, rather than a 24hr day.
4. 4. Gen 2:4, “When God created...” translates the Hebrew which means “In the day...”. Akin to an elderly person saying “In my day we never would have done this or that.”

“In my day, there was one day when during the daytime where we dreamed of the day when peace would come.”

Moreover, the first 5 days have no definite article, which the 6th and 7th do. A couple of observations. Firstly, this means the first 5 days are described as day one, day two, etc, not the first day, the second day. Some have noted the author wanted to make a distinction between 5 and 6 when Humans were created and God rested.

The actual act of creation happens in 1:1-2, with the perfect tense used for “create”. Then the narration of creation over 7 days begins. What this allows is this: the physical universe and the earth, according to the text, can be present for a period of time, perhaps billions of years, before the days of creation on earth get underway. The beginning of the earth and universe do not occur on day one. On this reading, the earth could be billions of years old and the seven days of creation be 24hr days. Therefore, if an unspecified period of time exists in the text between 1:1-2 and 1:3, we could propose that each 24hr creation day does not occur in a sequential week, nor even referring to a period of time, but actual days separated by a length of time between each actual day.

So it could look something like this:

Gen 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 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.



How much time exists between God creating the universe in Gen 1:1-2 and God’s creative activity on the earth over the 7 days of Gen 1:3ff? It is unspecified, and therefore it could accommodate a very old universe and earth before the seven days of creation occurred.



3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light....And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

At each new creation day, God speaks new information and energy into the cosmos. This approach would seem congruent with geological findings which seem to suggest the sudden appearance of complexity followed by times of nothing new.

Genesis affirms the chemical make-up of life- plants, animals and humans said to have been formed from the earth. But unlike, atheistic naturalism, Genesis also affirms humans are more than mud and chemicals; they bear the image of God and have spiritual life.

A couple of matter addressed: Death

How do we reconcile the fact that Paul writes that death came through Adam? That is, if the cycle of life on earth is older than humans, and if therefore there were always predators, and death and dying, how do we reconcile this with Paul's statement? Paul says death came to humans, through Adam. (Death spread to all men- Rom 5:12)

Moreover, were the first humans immortal- likely not. As long as they had access to the tree of life, they would live. This means that that physical immortality was not inherent in humans from the beginning, but predicated on them eating from the tree of life. And if the tree of life was only in the garden of Eden that God cultivated and made, then what about all the creatures and living things outside of the garden? (1 Tim 6:16- God alone immortal)

The death that comes is first and foremost the death of our open, unhindered and intimate relationship with God. Physical death is the last in a series of 'deaths'.

But this means that plants, animals and insects could have been living and dying for millions of years, and adapting to their environments, without contradicting or denying the testimony of the Bible. Plants and animals and insects are not subject to the moral and ethical demands that humans are.

Conclusions

Orthodox Christian faith upholds that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. It is the timeframe and the means of how God did this that are the source of the debate. What you think of Creation and Evolution does not put at risk your salvation through Christ, nor is it a test of Christian orthodoxy. The history of interpreting Genesis has always been heterodox. Sincere Christians believe a spectrum of positions regarding this:

- i. *Young-Earth Creationism*. Earth was created in its basic form 6-10,000 years ago. No living creatures before Eden and no death before the Fall. All life forms created simultaneously within six 24 hour days.
- ii. *Old Earth Creationism*. Sees no problem with vast age of the world, and sees 'days' as referring to a long or indefinite period of time. There also may be a large gap between Genesis 1.1 and 1.2, thus distinguishing between the primordial act of the universe's creation, and the subsequent emerging of life on earth.
- iii. *Intelligent Design*. The 'irreducible complexity' within the biosphere logically demands intelligent design. Does not necessarily deny biological evolution, but the Darwinian claim that there is no purpose involved. While the direct intelligence involved does not have to be God, it is inferred.

- iv. *Theistic Evolution (BioLogos)*. God uses evolution to create life from inorganic materials. Evolution is not random and purposeless, but guided by God. Some claim that God has intervened at certain points to bring new levels of complexity, while others argue for a 'fully gifted creation' where God built within life the possibility of the emergence of new complex life forms. Creation is event and process, as opposed to one past event.¹

One of the really sad things about this debate is it has locked some Christians into untenable positions, and kept some from the faith because they are led to believe they have to believe in a 6000 earth to be a Christian.

But no one now believes in a fixed earth, a geocentric view of the universe. Everyone believes in heliocentric view. But at the time 500 years ago, it was a major threat to the church-and secular academy too. You don't have to believe in a young earth and 7x 24hr days to be a follower of Jesus. You do need to believe that Jesus is God in the flesh, gave his perfect life for our sins and rose from the grave.

"We can't make Genesis say more than it does- it is not a scientific textbook- but neither do we let it say less- it asserts God as Creator. "Calvin points out that the Bible is primarily concerned the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is not an astronomical, geographical, or biological textbook.""²

The Bible is literature and must be understood as such in its context, culture and the general sense of the text. It is inspired by God, to be sure, but it is not a scientific textbook and does not communicate everything there is to know, just the things everyone needs to know. We need to understand metaphor and simile. When Jesus says "I am the door" do we take it to mean that he is a wooden structure on hinges with a handle? No, we take it to mean that he is the entrance into the fullness of life God desires for us. Augustine said: "We do not read in the Gospel that the Lord said that I send you the Paraclete [comforter/advocate] who will teach you about the course of the sun and the moon, for he wanted to make Christians and not Mathematicians."

The following quote comes from a recent book by an atheist about Genesis:

"Here, then, is the Genesis Enigma: The opening page of Genesis is scientifically accurate but was written long before the science was known. How did the writer of this page come to write this creation account?... I must admit, rather nervously as a scientist averse to entertaining such an idea, that the evidence that the writer of the opening page of the Bible was divinely inspired is strong. I have never before encountered such powerful impartial evidence that the Bible is the product of divine inspiration." Andrew Parker, *The Genesis Enigma*. (Research Director at London's Natural History Museum and atheist evolutionary biologist)

1 Alister McGrath, *Science & Religion: A New Introduction*. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 39-41.

2 Alister McGrath, *Science & Religion: A New Introduction*. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 21.