

COMMON QUESTION NO. 15

DID GOD MAKE THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS?

Throughout the centuries Christians have believed that God created everything in just six days. As you open the Bible to the first chapter (Genesis 1) you read of six days and then God resting on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. It is only in the last 150 years or so that this view has been challenged with the rise of the theory of evolution. Is the Bible true? Has it been properly interpreted? Does it really teach creation in six 24-hour days? Here are some reasons for believing that the traditional understanding of the Bible is correct.

1. Genesis chapter 1 is written as history.

(1) There are the marks of historical writing (prose) and not of poetic style. The book of Job starts with history. In chapter 1-2 Job really did lose everything and he really did get sores all over his body. But from chapter 3 the style is poetic as he curses the day of his birth. There is a poetic account of Genesis 1:9-10 in Job 38:8-11 which is quite different! Hebrew poetry is marked by parallelism, for example “prescribed limits” and “set bars and doors” (verse 10), which say the same thing. But in Genesis 1 there is nothing poetic. The verbs are in the typical form of Hebrew narrative. The first verb (created) is in the Hebrew perfect tense, then the following verbs have ‘and’ with the Hebrew imperfect tense. We are told what the earth was like at the beginning (verses 1-2). Then God speaks and everything comes into being from nothing (ex nihilo) in six successive days.

(2) The rest of the Bible understands creation as history.

- God spoke everything into being – Psalm 33:6,9, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Hebrews 11:3, 2 Peter 3:5.
- God made all things by His power and wisdom – Jeremiah 10:11-12, Acts 14:15, 17:24, Romans 1:20.
- Creation of man and woman – Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7.

(3) The relationship of Genesis 1 with the rest of Genesis. Genesis is written in 10 sections, with the words, “These are the generations of ...” (2:4, 5:1, etc.). Every section is historical, and Genesis 1 is the introduction to the whole book. Chapter 2 (from verse 4) is not another account of creation, but of what came from the earth, and in particular, man. It is a preparation for chapter 3 and the fall into sin.

(4) The use of the word “day”. The word is very commonly used in the Bible and almost always means a period of 24 hours, or that part when it is daylight. This is always true when used with a number, or morning/evening. Consider how it is used, both singular and plural, in Genesis 3:8,14, 4:14, for example. Occasionally ‘day’ is used for a period of time, and the context makes this meaning very clear. Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 are not exceptions, for to God the long one thousand years is as our ‘yesterday’.

(5) The words ‘evening and morning’. A clear indication that normal 24-hour days are being referred to in Genesis 1 is the repetition of the words, “there was evening and there was morning’ (verses 5,8,13,19,25,31).

2. Six days of work and one day of rest is the pattern for our lives.

The pattern established by God at creation of six days of work and one of rest is the basis of the 4th. of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:8-11). It clearly states, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day". This seven day week is universal. The command is to "remember" this Sabbath (or rest) day which takes us back to the days of creation.

3. Evolution is a theory which has fatal flaws.

If the Bible is so clear why do many people not believe it is true? It is not because such people have seen that we have wrongly interpreted the Bible, but it is because of the claims of science that puts God out of the picture from the beginning. It is obvious that no one was there when the world began so there are no witnesses to give testimony! Of course God was there! He knows what happened and He used Moses to record it in Genesis.

However, there are well meaning Christians who have sought to 'reconcile' the Bible and the theory of Evolution. The particular problem has been that whereas Genesis 1 speaks of just 6 days, scientists began to talk of millions and billions of years. Was there any way to fit in so much time into Genesis so that we could both believe the Bible and much of science?

First, there was the Gap Theory. The millions of years is put between Genesis 1:1, which is interpreted as the initial creation, and 1:2ff. It was popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible. During the so-called gap everything was ruined by Satan, and the following six days of 'creation' are God's reconstruction. Among the many problems is that death would have been in the world before the Fall for it is in the gap that all the fossils were formed. It further contradicts the clear statements that God made *everything* in 6 days (e.g. Exodus 20:11, where heaven and earth includes all things).

Second, there is the Day-Age Theory, by which each 'day' is made a very long period of time. This may allow for the millions of years needed, but it is shipwrecked on the rocks of the order of creation. Much of science insists that the sun was former before the earth, but Genesis 1 has the sun created by God on the 4th. day.

Third, there is the Framework Hypothesis. This denies that the days are in any sense historical, however long. The claim is that 'six days' are a literary device to teach the theology of six days of work and one of rest. 'Days' 1-3 are seen as parallel with 'days' 4-6. For example, days 1 and 4 both have to do with light. But such parallels are superficial. The "expanse" in which the sun was put was made on the 2nd. day and not the 1st.

4. Conclusions

(1) The age of the earth. The earth is young, thousands and not millions of years old. The dating methods that scientists use have presuppositions. It is significant that there are rocks formed in recent decades from volcanoes that give dates millions of years old!

(2) Science and the Bible. Are they really contradictory? Scientists cannot demonstrate by experiment that the earth is millions of years old. There were no human witnesses, and it cannot be tested in a laboratory. There are only rocks and fossils, which have no labels, and differing interpretations depends upon differing presuppositions.

(3) Is this really important? If we cannot trust the Bible in its very first chapter, why should we trust it anywhere else? There is nothing more fundamental in the Bible than the teaching that the Triune God is the creator of everything. This is the basis of His absolute sovereignty, and of our total moral responsibility to Him.