

“Let There Be Lights”

Sermon Notes

- **The sun, moon, and stars have a Designer, and the Scriptures are crystal clear as to their design**

**Four purposes for the stuff on day four...*

1. ...to separate light from darkness (vv.14a, 18b)

 2. ...to facilitate true worship (v.14b)

 3. ...to illuminate the earth (vv.15, 17)

 4. ...to moderate day and night (vv.16, 18a)
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- The 1st (official) solar day (v.19)

Next Week: Genesis 1:20-23 - “Let There Be Fish & Fowl”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of June 15th-21st

Young Earth or Old Earth: What Does the Bible Teach?

This week and next, we have the privilege to dive into the important question of the scriptural teaching concerning the age of the earth. From the beginning of our movement as the Evangelical Free Church (EFCA), this is a matter which we have been committed to discuss, even to debate, but over which we do not divide. The EFCA has both young earth and old earth creationists within our fellowship and we consider that a strength rather than a weakness. Just a few years ago at the Desiring God website¹, a brief written debate was hosted between two outstanding evangelical scholars. Dr. Jason DeRouchie represented the young earth position, and Dr. Wayne Grudem gave the old earth view. After each one made his case, the other had an opportunity to respond. This week, we will consider the young earth view from Dr. DeRouchie followed by the old earth response from Dr. Grudem. Next week, we'll start with Dr. Grudem and the old earth position followed by the young earth response from Dr. DeRouchie. Since this is a longer study guide than usual, if you intend to use it in your community group, you may wish to read through it carefully prior to the meeting. That way, you can maximize the discussion time. We hope the study this week and next is a blessing to you as we continue to explore the book of Genesis!

“Our Young Earth”: Arguments for Thousands of Years By Dr. Jason DeRouchie

At stake in the question of the earth's age is faithful exegesis of the biblical text aligned with a faithful interpretation of the scientific data. Because no one but God was present at the beginning, and because the Bible is God's inerrant word, Scripture holds highest authority in answering questions of time and space. Scripture's teaching on a subject must bear guiding weight in assessing all matters related to the created sphere.

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/series/how-old-is-the-earth> . Accessed 6/13/25 @ 2pm.

Let us be clear: God's role as creator, his purpose for creation, and the historicity of Adam and Eve as the first parents are non-negotiable for Christian belief. Furthermore, evolutionary creationism (i.e., theistic evolution) of any form is unwarranted biblically. Nevertheless, while there is much at stake, the age of the earth is not among the central doctrines that should divide. Conservative Christianity has remained broad enough for both young-earth and old-earth creationism (akin somewhat to credo- versus paedo-baptism or varying millennial views). I remain a convinced young-earth creationist because of the overwhelming biblical data. However, there is no single silver-bullet biblical or scientific argument for my position, and old-earth creationists can craft legitimate, thoughtful responses to each of my claims. The weight of my case is cumulative, and I question whether every argument I make can be legitimately falsified.

Humanity in the First Week

Argument 1: Genesis 1:1–2:3 places the creation of humanity within the first week of creation. The most natural reading of the Bible's introduction points to a young earth.

The use of Hebrew *yôm* (meaning *day*) with the refrain “there was evening and there was morning” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), along with the mention of light and darkness, day and night, and the one-week structure strongly, suggests that the communicator of this revelation was portraying the equivalent of 24-hour calendar days, even though the sun is not created until day four (Genesis 1:14–19). Mankind is here portrayed as being created on day six of God's first workweek. The day-age theory (wherein God created all of physical creation out of nothing in a chronological progression of ages spanning an indefinite period of time) does not seem to fit this context. And the gap theory (which posits a very long span between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2) does not appear to be allowed by the Hebrew text.

While later meditations on creation (e.g., Psalm 104) never refer to the “days,” the fact that Yahweh built Israel's 6+1 pattern of life upon the pattern of the creation week (Exodus 20:11) seems best understood only if Israel was already aware of the 6+1 pattern of the creation week (see Exodus 16:23–29; compare Genesis 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12) and viewed it as an actual as opposed to figurative or analogical reality. Specifically, Israel's call to keep the Sabbath is grounded in God's original workweek, which is difficult to read analogically (Exodus 20:10–11): “The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall

not do any work. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.”

In the Beginning

Argument 2: The New Testament closely associates the history of Genesis 2–4 with the beginning of the world. Old-earth models require either that mankind’s creation be separated from the “beginning” by millions or even billions of years, or that the Genesis 1:1 “beginning” stretched out for a period of time massively longer than all the time that has followed. The former discounts the New Testament link between the “beginning” of Genesis 1:1 and the creation of mankind in 1:26–28, and the latter forces a strange use of the term of “beginning,” wherein what happens in the ninth inning is still the “beginning.”

In the New Testament, we read that Jesus saw the institution of marriage as being closely linked to the beginning of creation (Mark 10:6; cf. Matthew 19:4, 8; see Genesis 2:21–25). He declared that Satan’s murderous activity (not just his tendencies) through his deception of Eve was closely associated with the beginning of creation (John 8:44). He linked this murderous, sinful activity with the promise that the offspring of the woman would stand in friction with the serpent and his offspring (1 John 3:8; cf. Genesis 3:1–6, 15). He saw the first human experience of tribulation as being located near the beginning of creation (likely referring to Cain’s killing of Abel) (Mark 13:19; cf. Matthew 24:21; see Genesis 4:8). He placed the martyrdom of Abel near the foundation of the world (Luke 11:49–50; cf. Matthew 23:35; see Genesis 4:8).

The writer of Hebrews also considered the “foundation of the world” to be the conclusion of the sixth day, placed humanity’s rebellion (for which Jesus suffered) very near this time, and contrasted this foundation with the “end of the ages” realized in the work of Christ (Hebrews 4:3–4; 9:25–26).

Linear Genealogies

Argument 3: The linear genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 point to a recent humanity. While some biblical genealogies are clearly selective (e.g., Matthew 1:1; 1:2–17), the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are so specific that they resist a selective reading and thus require that humanity has existed for a relatively short time.

The linear genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are unique in all of Scripture with respect to the age detail they provide (see, e.g., Genesis 5:3–11). Even if “son” at times means grandson or great-grandson (as can happen in Scripture), the specificity of the ages counters the likelihood of gaps. Moreover, a number of the seemingly “father-son/grandson/great-grandson” relationships are shown elsewhere to be just that — e.g., Adam with Seth (Genesis 4:25), Noah with Ham, Shem, and Japheth (6:10), Terah with Abraham (11:31).

A solid explanation for the presence of specific ages in these genealogies is the messianic and missiological purposes of Genesis. Moses seems to have gone out of his way to show that God preserved the line of hope *in every generation* from Adam to Noah, from Shem to Terah, and from Abraham to Israel. The specified years all highlight the faithfulness of God to preserve his line hoping in the offspring promise of Genesis 3:15. As such, leaving out generations would have gone against the apparent purpose.

Adding the ages in the genealogies points to humanity being around 6,000 years old.

Climax of Creation

Argument 4: Adam’s high role as head of the first creation and mankind’s station as the climax of creation and image of God both support a young earth. It makes less sense to think that God allowed the bulk of creation to exist for millennia without its overseers.

Genesis 1:1–2:3 associates all major “rulers” of the first creation with humanity. The luminaries separate day and night and establish the earth’s calendar (Genesis 1:14), but they also serve as “signs” for humans that stress the surety of God’s promises (Genesis 15:5; Jeremiah 33:22). Humans are called to “fill the earth and subdue it” and to “have dominion over the fish . . . birds . . . and every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

Humans are the climax of creation and sole representatives of God on the earth, with some being chosen “in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, having been predestined in love for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ . . . to the praise of his glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:4–6). Only on the sixth day is the definite article “the” added to the day-ending formula (“a first day, a second day, a third day, . . . *the* sixth day”). Day six gets the most literary space and includes the longest speeches. Only at

the end of day six does God declare creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Only at day six does God declare something he makes to be “in his image,” giving humanity oversight in the world. Scripture portrays the first man, Adam, as representative covenantal head over the first creation (Genesis 2:15; Romans 5:18–19; 1 Cor. 15:45).

In addition, God’s oversight, provision, and protection of animals (Psalms 104:14, 21, 24, 27; 145:14–16; 147:9; Matthew 6:26; Luke 12:24) is significantly manifest through mankind (Genesis 1:28; 2:15; Psalm 8:6–8[7–9]).

Animal Suffering and Death

Argument 5: Scripture usually portrays the suffering and death of living creatures, including animals, as part of the curse, so millions of years of animal death and suffering pre-fall seems unlikely. God initially curses the world on account of human sin, so death and suffering in land animals and birds most likely resulted *from mankind’s fall* and were not present before it, as all old-earth models require..

The principal consequence of humanity’s garden rebellion was human death both physically and spiritually (Genesis 2:17; 3:16–19; Romans 5:12). Humanity’s sin in the garden brought negative consequences not only on humanity, however, but also to the created world at large: God cursed the animals (Genesis 3:14). God cursed the ground (Genesis 3:17–19). God subjected the whole world to futility (Romans 8:20–21).

Scripture regularly associates animal death with curse and animal life with blessing. Both realities suggest that death and suffering in land animals and birds would have resulted *from the fall* and not been present before it.

First, the fact that the serpent is cursed “more than/above” (= Hebrew *min* of comparison) all livestock and beasts of the field implies that the land animals were indeed impacted directly and negatively by humanity’s fall (Genesis 3:14; cf. 3:1).

Second, the curse on the ground (Genesis 3:17) shapes the backdrop to Noah’s birth (5:29), and the judgment curse of the flood includes the death of all beasts, birds, and creeping things (7:21–23), save those on the ark, which were set apart to preserve non-human land creatures after the flood (6:19–20; 7:3).

Third, eight of the ten judgment plagues on Egypt included animals becoming pests to humans or the mass suffering and death of livestock in a way that negatively impacted human existence (Exodus 8–12).

Fourth, the penal substitutionary blood of the Passover lamb alone secured the lives of Israel's firstborn among *both* humans and beasts (Exodus 12:12–13).

Fifth, under the blessings of the Mosaic (old) covenant, mankind would live in safety from animal predation (Leviticus 26:6) and cattle and herds would flourish and increase (Deuteronomy 7:13–14; 28:4, 11). In contrast, under curse, humans would stand in fear of animal predation (Leviticus 26:22), cattle and herds would languish (Deuteronomy 28:18), and dead human flesh would be the food of beast and bird (28:26). These realities are all affirmed in the prophets (e.g., Jeremiah 7:20; 12:4, Haggai 1:9–11, Malachi 3:9–12; 4:6).

Sixth, in the context of his wars of judgment, Yahweh called Israel to slaughter everything that breathes, including the animals (Deuteronomy 13:15; 20:16; 1 Samuel 15:3).

Seventh, the Preacher in Ecclesiastes associates the death of animals with that of humans (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20) and unhesitatingly connects the reality of both deaths with the curse at the fall: “All are from the dust, and to dust all return” (see Genesis 3:19–20). This link strongly points to the death of both animals and humans as beginning at the same time.

Old-earth creationists struggle to clarify what actually changes in the non-human world at the curse, for they believe an extended period (even millions of years) of animal suffering and death already existed pre-fall. In contrast, Scripture points to God's curse of the world as a decisive turning point and then commonly associates animal death with curse.

Eating Meat and the Curse's End

Argument 6: The limiting of animal death in the eternal state as a restoring of Eden suggests that all terrestrial death began after the fall. Specifically, because eating meat likely symbolizes Jesus's victory over the curse, the limiting of animal death in the eternal state to redeemed humanity's consuming of meat likely signals the restoring of Eden rather than an escalation beyond it and

suggests that all terrestrial death began after the fall and that, therefore, the earth is young.

Scripture explicitly connects sin, suffering, and death in all its forms only to the fall (Genesis 3:14–15; Romans 1:24, 26, 28; 8:18–23). It also highlights Christ's death and resurrection as the only solution to the problem of human rebellion and its consequences, which appears to include all earthly evil, both natural evils like cancer and car accidents and moral evils directly related to rebellion against God. Specifically, the Bible teaches that Christ's work was designed to restore all things (Acts 3:21), to unite all things (Ephesians 1:10), to reconcile all things to God (Colossians 1:17), to do away with death, tears, and pain (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4), and to eradicate the curse and all that is unclean (Revelation 21:27; 22:3).

This eternal redemptive reality is portrayed both as restoring the garden of Eden (pre-fall) and as escalating beyond it by completing what the first Adam failed to secure. This new/re-creation will bear elements that are similar to the original creation pre-fall (Ezekiel 36:35; Isaiah 51:3; Romans 8:20–21; Revelation 2:7; 22:1–5, 14, 19), but it will be absent of any past or potential influence of evil or curse (Revelation 21:27; 22:3), save the sustained reminder of the former rebellion of the elect in order to sustain their awe of the saving work of King Jesus. Examples of such reminders will include lament over sin (Ezekiel 36:31), the presence of salt in the bogs around the once-Dead Sea (47:11; cf. Genesis 13:10; 19:24–26), the presence of transformed multiple tongues rather than a single language (Zephaniah 3:9; Revelation 5:9; 7:9; cf. Genesis 11:6–9), and the visual identification of Christ as both sacrificial and conquering Lamb (Revelation 5:5–6, 12–13; 7:10, 14; 17:14; 19:9; 21:22–23; 22:1, 3).

In such a context of restoration, reconciliation, and eradication, it is important to recognize that predatory activity among the animal kingdom will cease and that death will be present only in relation to humans eating meat. In the present fallen age, animals' predatory activity is part of God's revealed purposes (Psalm 104:21; Job 38:39–41), so long as it does not threaten humans (Psalm 104:23; Deuteronomy 7:22; Judges 14:5; 2 Kings 17:25) or domesticated animals (1 Samuel 17:34–35; Isaiah 31:4; Amos 3:12). Only after mankind's fall and the global curse did humans become a target for animal predatory activity and did God grant people permission to consume animal meat, partly in order to cause the animals to fear them (Genesis 9:2–3; cf. 1:30). In this cursed world, eating meat affirms mankind's call to reflect, resemble, and represent God by exerting dominion (1:26, 28; cf. Psalm 8:6–8[7–9]), and it also testifies to God's curse-overcoming power.

Specifically, from the earliest days after God exiled humanity from the garden, humans distinguished clean animals from unclean ones (Genesis 7:2–3, 8). After God allowed humans to consume animal flesh, he allowed his people to eat only the clean (Leviticus 20:25–26). Scripture treats as unclean all animals that in some way symbolically look like the serpent in the garden — whether due to their crafty, predatory, killing instincts (Genesis 3:1–5 with 2:17; cf. John 8:44; 10:10) or due to their dust-eating association with death and waste (Genesis 3:14). And it is because Christ overcomes the evil one at the cross (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 2:15; cf. Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Revelation 12:9) that all foods are now clean (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:10–15, 28; Romans 14:14, 20; 1 Timothy 4:4). That makes the eating of all foods a testimony of Christ’s curse-overcoming power.

In view of the full redemptive work of Christ, the restored new creation and new covenant will extend to the beasts, birds, and creeping things, resulting in global safety (Hosea 2:18; Isaiah 35:9), as the once-predatory animals (perhaps a picture of hostile nations) become vegetarian and dwell peacefully alongside lamb and the child king, so that no creature need fear them (Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25; cf. 9:6–7). In that day of consummation, God will put down all enemy oppression, abolish all human disease, suffering, and death, and make an end of the curse (Isaiah 25; 65:17–25; Revelation 21:3–5; 22:3). In the new heavens and new earth, humans will never fear predators, and terrestrial creatures will not be the diet of one another. These realities are part of Christ’s fixing what went wrong at the fall and help identify the return to the pre-fall state rather than an escalation beyond it.

Furthermore, as a sustained testimony that Christ has fully overcome the curse, humans will continue to eat animals in the new heavens and new earth (e.g., Isaiah 25:6, 8; Ezekiel 47:9–10; Matthew 22:2–4; Luke 22:15–18, 29–30; Revelation 19:7, 9; 21:1, 4, 10; cf. Luke 24:41–43; John 21:12–13). Because God allowed humans to eat meat only post-fall, and because eating that meat testifies to Christ’s curse-overcoming victory, which culminates in Jesus’s triumph over the unclean serpent at the cross, the restriction in the eternal state of animal death to redeemed humanity’s meat-consumption points to the absence of animal death before the fall and, therefore, to a young earth.

Conclusion: Young Earth

The biblical data supports the belief that the earth is young. We see this (1) in the way Scripture portrays creation as a literal work week, (2) in the way the New Testament links the early history of mankind with the beginning, (3) in the

unlikelihood that there are time gaps in the linear genealogies of Genesis, (4) in the way the Bible consistently portrays humanity as head of terrestrial creation, (5) in the fact Scripture regularly associates animal death and suffering with curse and makes it unlikely that such was happening before the fall, and (6) in the way human meat consumption in the eternal state testifies to Jesus's curse-overcoming work.

“A Response to Young-Earth Arguments” **By Dr. Wayne Grudem**

I want to thank Dr. DeRouchie for his thoughtful and clear argument in favor of a young earth. I agree with him that this discussion is one where Christians can hold different viewpoints but still affirm that the opposite position is acceptable within doctrinal orthodoxy.

But I'm not persuaded by his six arguments, as I explain in the following replies.

The ‘Most Natural Reading’

Reply 1: Our initial reading of a passage is not always the correct reading.

Dr. DeRouchie says, “The most natural reading of the Bible’s introduction points to a young earth,” and he gives several reasons why he thinks the six “days” of creation were “the equivalent of 24-hour calendar days, even though the sun was not created until day four (Genesis 1:14–19).”

“Our initial reading of a passage is not always the correct reading.”

It is not clear what he means by saying that the young-earth view is “the most natural reading.” I understand this expression to mean something like “the first-impression reading” — that is, the meaning that an ordinary reader “naturally” gives the passage when first reading it.

But many times in Scripture, further inspection of the text allows us to see that our first understanding was not correct. For example, someone could read, “The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises”

(Ecclesiastes 1:5), and think that Scripture teaches that the sun goes quickly around the earth at night and reappears in the east the next morning. But eventually, scientific observation proved conclusively that the earth rotates on its axis, showing that a first impression or “most natural reading” was not correct. Rather, Ecclesiastes 1:5 was only describing the movement of the sun as it appeared to an observer standing on earth. That is not our first-impression reading, but that is the correct meaning. Similarly, our first impression of the six “days” in Genesis 1 might not be the correct understanding — the “days” might represent long periods of time (as in Genesis 2:4) rather than 24-hour days.

And when the original readers saw that the sun was not established to mark “days and years” until day 4 (Genesis 1:14), they would realize that the first three creation days (at least) were somehow different from ordinary days.

What About the Science?

Reply 2: The scientific evidence requires explanation.

I was a bit surprised that Dr. DeRouchie gave no explanation for how a young-earth position can explain the many evidences of extreme age in the universe and especially on the earth, such as the radiometric dating of rocks from the earth, the moon, and asteroids; the billions of light-years distance of many stars; the expansion rate of the universe; the observation of distant stars burning out millions of years ago; the rate of continental drift; hundreds of thousands of years of ice layers in the Arctic; tens of thousands of years of layers of sediment in lakes, and so forth. These scientific observations are the reason so many thousands of Christians hold to an old-earth position, and one can hardly expect us to change our minds if no convincing alternative interpretation of this evidence can be given.

Genesis 1–4 as ‘the Beginning’

Reply 3: The New Testament views all of Genesis 1–4 as “the beginning” because it all is preparation for the main story of the Bible: the history of the creation, fall, and redemption of human beings through the work of Jesus Christ.

It is not surprising that the events of Genesis 1–4, for example, are all spoken of as “the beginning,” because, from a literary standpoint, that is how Genesis 1–4 functions in relationship to the rest of the Bible. The creation of human beings is not “the ninth inning,” as Dr. DeRouchie claims, but all of Genesis 1–4 is more like the first inning, and the rest of the Bible — moving through Noah, Abraham, David; the exile and return; the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the establishment of the church; and the return of Christ — is the remaining eight innings of the redemption story.

Role of Genealogies

Reply 4: The genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 lay the groundwork for the New Testament to show the descent of Christ from Adam, and they show the remarkable age and health of the pre-flood generations, but they are not intended to teach us the age of the earth or of the human race.

Dr. DeRouchie agrees that the word *son* in Scripture can sometimes mean grandson or great-grandson, so he (in principle) does not have to hold to Archbishop Ussher’s date of 4004 BC for the creation, but he comes close to that when he notes that “adding the ages in the genealogies points to humanity being around 6,000 years old.”

But if we agree that the genealogies can have gaps, and that they highlight only certain individuals, and that many individuals in the early generations lived several hundred years, then there is little reason to oppose a figure of 10,000 or even 20,000 years for the human race.

God’s Eternity and Patience

Reply 5: An earth that existed for billions of years without human beings can encourage us to ponder with amazement God’s even greater eternity and his infinite patience.

Peter writes, “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). We cannot fully understand this reality, but it does suggest that from God’s perspective, 13.8 billion years may not seem like a long time at all, and that age does allow for the light from distant stars, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, to have enough time to reach the earth and awaken

our awe and worship as we ponder the infinite wisdom and power of a Creator who could make such an immense universe.

Possibility of Peaceful Animal Death

Reply 6: It is entirely possible that, before the fall of Adam and Eve, animals, like plants, lived a normal life span and then died quietly and peacefully.

The warning God gave to Adam and Eve was that, if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *they* would die, not that animals would also begin to die. Paul writes, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). At the fall, death spread to “all men” (plural of *anthrōpos*, “men, human beings”), not animals. (Note that animals are never said to sin.)

Back in 1975, in arguing that there will be “no final conflict” between the facts of science and the teachings of Scripture, apologist Francis Schaeffer noted that there was the possibility of “the death of animals before the fall.” He said, “If we watch a dog die in a warm chimney corner, there is no struggle. It is like a leaf falling from a tree. . . . One could think of there being natural cycles for the animals, up to all that does not include man, with death not by the chase and not in agony.”¹

Dr. DeRouchie allows for the death of animals to provide meat for us to eat in the age to come, so there should be no objection in principle to the idea of animals, like plants, living a normal course of life and then peacefully dying on earth — for millions of years, with their bodies decaying and, along with dead plants, decomposing and providing the material that produced the fossil fuels like coal and oil that we find in the earth today.

I do not believe that Dr. DeRouchie gave adequate consideration to the idea of peaceful animal death before the fall, which would provide an answer to his fifth and sixth arguments.

And so, in spite of Dr. DeRouchie’s thoughtful arguments, I end up where I began: God does not intend in the Bible to tell us the age of the earth, and an overwhelming amount of evidence from many different fields of science leads us to conclude that the universe is 13.8 billion years old and the earth is 4.5 billion years old. God created a truly amazing, truly gigantic universe.

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1. Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 31. ↵