

Creation and the Question of Angels

Introduction

The Bible teaches creation and not evolution. Sadly though, Christians are far from agreed on what exactly the Bible *does* teach on creation. This has largely come about by the desire of many Christians to find accommodation for science in the Scriptures. Thus some have sought to present the six days of God's labor in Genesis as six distinct periods of time to allow for science's so-called geological ages. Others have claimed that the six days did not involve the original creation, which was given only in the first verse of the Bible. This allows as many years as the geologists desire to be placed between the first two verses of the Bible. However, recent powerful evidence suggests that the fossils, on which men base the geological ages, were actually created by Noah's flood. This has thrown many back on the idea that God created everything in six literal days of 24 hours each and that the earth is at most a few thousand years old instead of the many millions believed by most scientists. Christian advocates of each of these different interpretations of the creation record all have one fundamental mistake in common: *they use science to interpret Scripture.*

The Bible as the Word of God

Now let this writer say immediately that science contributes *nothing* to Scripture, although if scientists would believe Scripture, Scripture has much to contribute to science. God doesn't need the thoughts and ideas of men to prop up His Book. It stands alone, supreme and majestic, like the One who wrote it. Man changes and his views change with him. Many of the teachings of the men of science of yesterday are not the teachings of today's scientists, nor will the teachings of today's scientists necessarily be those of tomorrow's men of learning. In contrast, God says "I Jehovah change not" (Mal. 3: 6). Hence the inspired volume is as relevant and up-to-date as when it was completed nearly two millennia ago. The believer doesn't need the changing views of science to help him understand Scripture. His faith rests in God's Word simply because it is God's Word. As the old hymn writer said: "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain". I want therefore to examine each of the three views of creation mentioned in the in the light of what the Bible actually says.

The Sabbath

When God instituted the Sabbath for Israel, He gave a reason for it: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of Jehovah thy God...*For in six days* Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Ex. 20: 9-11 – my emphasis). The reason for man's labor and rest was God's labor and rest. Make those days of God's labor in Genesis vague periods of time and the argument for man's week of labor and rest has completely gone. Thus Scripture teaches that the six days of the Bible's first chapter are to be taken as *six literal days.*

The Hebrew Language

Linguists in the ancient languages tell us that unlike the Greek of the NT, the Hebrew of the OT lacks the range and depth of expression that both NT Greek and English possess. Yet it was the language chosen by God with which to give us the precise detail of creation because in this particular area Hebrew *is* rich having distinctive words for *create*, *make*, *form* and *fashion*. The Hebrew word translated *create* (*bara*) is employed in exactly the same way as our English word *create*. It is used firstly in the sense of originating something where there was nothing before and then secondly of making something from material already in existence. The word *bara* (*create*) is only ever attributed to an act of God in the Bible, for God alone creates. It is the word used in Gen 1: 1, 21 and 27. Hebrew has a different word for *make* which is *asah*. This word is used in Gen. 7, 16, 25, 31. Both *bara* and *asah* are used in Gen. 2: 2. While *bara* can mean make; *asah* cannot mean *create* (in the sense of making something out of nothing).

The Work of the Six Days

Outside of Genesis, there are just two places where we read of the six days of God's labor: "For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Ex. 20: 11) and "for [in] six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth" (Ex. 31: 17). In both cases the word used is *made (asah)* and not *create (bara)*. Thus these two Scriptures **cannot** be used to establish the theory that God **created** the universe in six days. In Gen. 2: 2 we are told that "God had finished on the seventh day his work which he had made (*asah*)" and in Gen. 2: 3 we have the statement that "he rested from all his work which God had created (*bara*) in making(*asah*) it". The last clause literally reads "created to make" as noted by the translator. There is nothing that demands the creation of the universe in six days but **there is** strong inference that the six days involved God **working with material that had already been created**.

The First Day

Those that advocate six days for the creation of everything have to begin day one in Gen. 1: 1. They realize that the conjunction *And* in Hebrew beginning verse two (and each succeeding verse) precludes the idea of verse one being a summary of what follows. Hence each verse of the first chapter must be taken as describing sequential events. Now as the creation of the heavenly bodies is relegated to day four this raises a problem: What is meant by the word *heavens* of verse one? One writer paraphrases the first verse as 'God called into existence the space-time-mass universe' to satisfy current scientific understanding of the physical universe as a continuum of time, space and matter. Thus the Hebrew words are accorded the vaguest possible meanings: 'In the beginning (time) God created the heavens (space) and the earth (matter)'. The first part of verse two gets a similar treatment being paraphrased as "the matter so created was at first unformed and uninhabited.' However, verse two also speaks of "the deep" meaning waters – and water is also matter! Perhaps enough has been said to show the morass into which one can be led by forcing the Scriptures into the current views of science.

Chapter One Terminology

Making the first verse of the Bible begin the first day militates against the terminology of the chapter. The six days of God's labor each have a beginning and an ending. Each day ends with the expression "And there was evening, and there was morning...". There is no variation of this terminology. It closes every day. Is there no expression then peculiar to the start of each day? The sixth day begins with the words "And God said, Let...". Follow it back. Day five, four, three, and two begin in the same way; "And God said, Let...". Should the first day be different? No! In Gen. 1: 3 we accordingly have "And God said, Let..." showing that the first day began in the third verse and not the first verse. (The fact that in the third and sixth days, we have the clause "And God said, Let..." occurring twice does not alter the pattern.) Hence verse one and two stand in isolation from the rest of the chapter – they describe the original creation and its subsequent ruin.

The Hosts of Heaven

The "host(s) of heaven" is an expression found some 19 times in the Bible. God uses this expression in just two ways: Firstly, to describe the sun, the moon and particularly the stars, and secondly, to describe the angels. We shall see that this expression completely refutes the idea that the original creation was completed in six literal days and is evidence that the six days of God's labor refers only to the reforming of the earth and adjustment of the heavens in relation to the earth so that it might be suitable for man. Those who believe that the six days involved the original creation refuse to acknowledge that the first two verses of the Bible are separate from the six days (the gap theory, as they call it). The complaint of such adherents is that the gap theory was used by many to accommodate the theories of evolutionists in regard to the geological strata and thus to show that science and the Bible agree. This was sadly true in some cases, although the gap theory can actually be traced back to Augustine. This, they rightly say, is a wholly wrong approach. Yet in reading their literature on the creation, one is forced to say that they fall into the very same trap and adapt and interpret the language of Genesis to suit **their** view of creation.

The first time the expression "the host of heaven" occurs is in Deut. 4: 19: "and lest thou lift up thine eyes to the heavens, and see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, the whole host of heaven". Now what is the **magnitude** of this expression "the host of heaven"? The patriarchs were told by God that their seed would be as "the stars of heaven"

(Gen. 22: 17; 26: 4) the “dust of the earth” (Gen. 13: 16; 28: 14) and the “sand that is on the sea-shore” (Gen. 22: 17). The latter two expressions are clearly of the same magnitude to an observer and cannot be counted, but to the observer in the time of the patriarchs the stars that they could see could be counted. The evidence of their eyes would dispute what God had said, but they did not go on what they saw but by faith they believed God’s Word. The pathway is the same for us. For what it matters, science has now come round to the view that God was right! The host of heaven, in referring to the stars, then refers to an uncountable number. This is confirmed in Jer. 33: 22 “As the host of the heavens cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured...”. With this simple fact in mind, let us now examine the work of day four in first chapter of Genesis.

And the Stars

The six-day creationists tell us that it is not until day four that the sun, moon and stars were created. For the moment, let us accept that the stars *were created* on the fourth day. How does day four describe the creation of the host of heaven, the stars, whose magnitude is akin to the sand of the sea – shore? The matter is simply contained in these words “– and the stars” (Gen. 1: 16). The reader is thus given the impression that the writer of Genesis appends the fact merely as an afterthought, as if he almost forgot to mention it. At best it is parenthetical. Does this accord with the description elsewhere of the stars as the host of heaven? If the six days involves the original creation of the heavens and the earth, why are the stars in day four treated as hardly worth a mention? Does the vastness of their number justify this? I think the six-day creationists have a problem! The answer is that the stars were created *before* the six days began where it says “In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the earth” (Gen. 1: 1) – my emphasis). The six days of God’s labor focus not on the heavens at all but on the earth, indeed five of those days have to do with the earth alone and only day four introduces heavenly bodies and then *only in relation to the earth*. The Hebrew word (*bara*) for *create* used in Gen. 1: 1 is not employed at all in Gen. 1: 14-19. What took place on day four was not the original creation of the sun, moon, and stars out of nothing but the orientation and adjustment of those heavenly bodies in relation to the earth for habitation by men.

The Angels

The expression, “the host of heaven” is also used in 1 Kings 22: 19, 21 where we read “I saw Jehovah sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left... And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah”. A similar reading is found in 2 Chron. 18: 18. Hence “the host of heaven” here refers not to the physical stars but to spirits. Now I read in Ps. 104: 4: “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flame of fire”. The “host of heaven” then is also used to describe the multitude of angels. Their number can be understood from Rev. 5: 11 “And I saw, and I heard [the] voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands”. Now angels are creatures and creatures are created. When were they created? The six-day creationists recognize that they have a problem here. How do they deal with it?

The Sons of God

Well, they rightly accept that “sons of God” in the OT are angels and thus realize that Job 38: 4-7 must not be ignored for it refers to the presence of the sons of God at the foundation of the earth: “Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who set the measures thereof – if thou knowest? Or who stretched a line upon it? Whereupon were the foundations thereof sunken? Or who laid its corner-stone, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” It creation in its totality be embraced in the six days, then depending on the meaning of the word *foundations*, the angels must have been created before day three *at the latest*. Where is this stated in the record of God’s labor of the six days? It isn’t! If the six days involve the original creation, why don’t the angels get even a mention? – the stars *at least* got a mention! There are thousands upon thousands of angels and yet compared to *one man* Adam, whose creation is detailed, they are ignored entirely! Surely such a fact must jolt any thinking person! The simple answer is that they are not mentioned because they were created prior to the six days when it says “God created the heavens” (Gen. 1: 1). The natural abode of the unfallen angels is the heavens (see Matt. 24: 36 etc.). The six days deal with the earth and what is related to it and man (for six is man’s number – see Rev. 13: 18).

Satan

Scriptures such as Is. 14: 12-15 and Ez. 28: 11-19 clearly describe Satan before he fell. He was created perfect and given the greatest dignity of any of God's creatures. His fall, and that of the angels who fell with him, is not recorded in Genesis but clearly took place before chapter three. If the six days describe the original creation in its entirety, then when did Satan fall? Not in the period of the six days for all at that time was pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1: 31).

Adam's Fall

Now Adam's fall did not take years but days at the most. The reason I say that is that while he called his helpmeet "Woman" (Gen. 2: 23) and had given names to all the creatures that God had made, he only gave the woman the name of "Eve" (Gen. 3: 20) after they had sinned, showing the brevity of the time. Hence if Adam's fall took days, Satan's fall must have been even quicker. Possible but improbable in the light of Is. 14: 12-15 and Ez. 28: 11-19! Why then is there no record of it in the Genesis account? Let us go a little further. As the sons of God in Gen. 6: 1-4 are angels who left their first estate (heaven), and as this incident is put on record in Genesis, then why isn't the original fall of Satan and his angels recorded and indeed why is the general creation of angels omitted? The reason is the one that we have had already. What is recorded in the six days of God's labor and subsequently in Genesis **is only that which is connected with man**. Hence there is no distinct mention of the original creation of Satan and the angels, nor is there any mention of Satan's fall (prior to the conditions of Gen. 1: 2). Satan's appearance in the garden on Eden is in relation to man. The incident of Genesis 6 is also detailed because it affected man – indeed it was the very reason for the bringing in of the judgment of the flood.

The Spirit of God

One final thought to establish the fact that angels were part of the original creation given in Gen. 1: 1. Verse two speaks of the "Spirit of God", not exactly "God" as in verse one. Why? It is said that this is the Holy Spirit. I do not disagree, but why is He not described thus? A little later in Genesis Jehovah says "My Spirit shall not always plead with Man" (Gen. 6: 3). "Spirit of God" and "My Spirit", when God is speaking, are virtually synonymous terms. *Spirit of God* is a **relative, and not an absolute term**. When God says "My Spirit" or the Scriptures speak of the Spirit of God, it assumes a background of other spirits (see as an example 1 John 4: 1,2) **If this is not the case, then language has no meaning**. Let us now look at Gen. 1: 2 in this light. Whatever else may be gleaned from the term "Spirit of God", it is undisputedly set against the background of other "spirits". Hence the events of verse two took place when other spirits (that is angels) existed, **having already been created**, although the action was that of the Spirit of God. Angels are thus included in the creation of the "heavens" of verse 1. Hence the six days of God's labor cannot embrace the original creation, but only the making of the earth, and the adjustment of the heavens, making them suitable for the habitation of man.

The Condition of the Earth

Gen. 1:2 states that the earth "was waste (*tohuw*) and empty (*bohuw*)" and Is. 45: 18 states "not as waste (*tohuw*) did he create (*bara*) it". Six-day creationists quote the rest of the verse in Is. 45: 18 (he formed (*yawtsar*) it to be inhabited") and argue that the better meaning of *tohuw* is *emptiness* and that the sense is that God did not intend the earth to remain in that empty state but to populate it with life. This just will not do. Whatever you make the Hebrew word to mean, Is. 45:18 says it was not created **as such** and Gen. 1: 2 **cannot** describe the earth's **original state**.

Now while *tohuw* occurs many times and can take different meanings depending on the context, there are just two other occasions where the words *tohuw* and *bohuw* occur together. The first is Jer. 4: 23: "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was waste (*tohuw*) and empty (*bohuw*); and the heavens, and they had no light". If my reader will go on and read vs 24-28 he will see that the state of the earth is paralleled with the state of the land of Israel, indeed the two are interwoven. Was this the original state of the land? No! Then "waste and empty" could not have been the original state of the earth. How did the land get into that state? "I beheld, and lo, the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down, before Jehovah, before his fierce anger" (v26). Hence the parallel state of Gen. 1: 2 probably came about through divine judgment

The prophecy of Is. 34 concerns the sand of Edom and God's judgment upon it. We have "And he shall stretch out upon it the line of waste (*tohuw*), and the plummets of emptiness (*bohuw*)" (v11). You cannot argue that this was the original

state of Edom – it was a state of the earth in Gen. 1: 2 likewise came about on account of divine judgment some time after God had created everything perfect in Gen. 1: 1. What was the cause of that judgement I do not enter into, what I do know is that what the six-day creationists regard as the gap-theory is Bible fact. The six days of God's labor were limited to the forming of the earth and adjustment of the heavens for man to dwell on the earth.

Conclusion

Creationists (so-called) have labored hard and long to demonstrate that what they believe fits the evidence of science. In so doing they have exposed the shaky foundations upon which the theory of evolution rests. It is a great pity, however, that their theology is sometimes more shaky than their science. The gap-theory may now only be a minority view – but it is the only view that fits the evidence of the Bible.

Adapted, S. Nobel, from "Jude 3, No. 87"