

An Overview of Creation Beliefs

Various Views

There are four basic views of how people got here on this earth. Within each view, there are also numerous variations in belief about the details.

Naturalistic Evolution

This is a belief system that life initially came from non-living matter as a natural process. Over a long period of time, the original life became increasing complex and divergent producing the wide range of living organisms (including man) that we find today. Natural selection was the process that drove a general movement toward increasing complexity within the living organisms. All life is explained by purely naturalistic, chance processes with no intervention by a creator. This is an atheistic belief system and, though claimed otherwise, is a faith-based system.

Theistic Evolution

This belief system is basically identical to Naturalistic Evolution; however, it adds God as the One who created the universe and the initial life form. God also put in place the evolutionary process which then produced all of the various, complex life forms over a long period of time. There are many Scriptural difficulties with this position. (This view is also called “evolutionary creationism.”)

Intelligent Design

This is a belief system that the high level of intelligent information and design observed in the universe cannot be explained by purely naturalistic, chance processes. Processes observed in microbiology are particularly complex and orderly. For example, DNA and its associated functions could not happen by mere chance. Intelligent Design is probably the least faith-based theory since it attempts to look at just the facts without making a faith judgment about who this Intelligent Designer might be. While not inherently Christian, Intelligent Design (“ID”) is compatible with Christianity if you acknowledge that the God of the Bible is the “Intelligent Designer” in the system.

Creationism

Creationism is the belief that God created everything, including life. The various species of life were all created fully developed by God during the creation described in the first chapter of Genesis. While *microevolution* (small adaptations within a species) can occur, *macroevolution* (a new species evolving from a previously existing species) does not occur. Those who believe in Creationism include two schools of thought: *Young Earth Creationists* and *Old Earth Creationists*. The Old Earth Creationists include two subgroups: those who believe the Bible account in Genesis is best explained using six ages of time as creation “days” and those who believe it is best explained using six literal days of creation.

Young Earth Creationists

This group believes that the earth is relatively young with proposed ages from about 6,000 to 20,000 years old. The six days of creation in Genesis are believed to be six literal, 24-hour days. They also believe that death did not enter the earth until Adam and

Eve sinned, so the fossil record must have been produced after the Fall. Generally, this group believes that the fossil record was a result of the flood of Noah. (This theory is sometimes called the “literal view” or “scientific creationism.”)

Old Earth Creationists

This group agrees with the many scientists that the earth is billions of years old. There are two basic ways this group explains how the long age of the earth corresponds to the creation account in Genesis.

Day-Age: Some Old Earth Creationists believe in a day-age theory of creation where each of the six “days” in the first chapter of Genesis were actually long ages. They point to the use of certain Hebrew words in the passages to support that interpretation. This group believes that the events recorded in the fossil record took place during the first five or six ages, and that mankind was created in the sixth age. (This theory is sometimes called “progressive creationism.”)

Six Literal Days: Other Old Earth Creationists believe that the six creation days in the first chapter of Genesis were literal days. This group believes in a relatively recent creation of Adam and Eve with a very long history of the earth before that creation. Creatures in the fossil record lived in the long ages before the creation of Adam and Eve during a period occurring between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This group points to words used in the Hebrew language that indicate that the original creation became disordered and needed to be formed and filled. This forming and filling took place during the six literal days of creation described in Genesis 1:3-31. (This theory is sometimes called the “gap theory.”)

Other Views

There are also several other views on creation. Some are variations of the above while others assume that the Bible accounts are symbolic stories of events that did not actually occur.

Age of the Earth

The majority of scientists believe that the earth is billions of years old. Radiometric dating methods generally give ages that are very old. There are other methods for dating the earth that give relatively young ages for the earth. Generally, those who believe in an old earth choose dating methods that yield long age estimates while those who believe in a young earth choose dating methods that yield short age estimates. It is important to remember that each of the many methods for estimating the age of the earth are based on assumptions. Apparently, at least some of the assumptions are invalid since various methods produce estimates from a few thousand years to billions of years for the age of the earth.

Dinosaurs

According to Naturalistic Evolution, dinosaurs existed and became extinct long before man appeared on the earth. Serious difficulties would be created for Naturalistic Evolution if conclusive evidence was found that man and dinosaurs existed at the same time. (Some interesting evidence has been found, but nothing conclusive for most scientists.)

Theistic Evolution proponents agree with Naturalistic Evolutionist on their view of dinosaurs.

Intelligent Design theories do not often address the age of the earth issue. Therefore, it is relatively unaffected by whether or not dinosaurs were contemporary with man.

Young Earth Creationist theories require that dinosaurs live at approximately the same time as man, though not necessarily in the same locale. They point to Scriptures mentioning the Behemoth (Job 40:15-24) and the Leviathan (Job 41:1-34) as possible descriptions of dinosaur-like creatures that were contemporary with man. They often believe that dinosaurs probably became extinct sometime soon after Noah's flood. Since the word "dinosaur" was coined relatively recently, it would not be expected in the Bible. However, they point to some passages (not all) that use the word translated as "dragon" for possible references to dinosaur-like creatures.

Old Earth Creationist theories generally accept that dinosaurs became extinct before man was created. They explain the Behemoth (Job 40:15-24) was possibly a hippopotamus or some similar animal that is now extinct. The Leviathan (Job 41:1-34) is described as either a crocodile or other similar, but extinct, animal. While some overlap between the lifetimes of man and dinosaur could theoretically happen in this viewpoint, it is generally held that such overlap did not occur.

What's a Christian to Believe?

Naturalistic Evolution is the only view that is totally incompatible with Christianity. Theistic Evolution is basically the same thing, but God has been thrown into the mix. While a Christian could believe in Theistic Evolution, it generally leads to a disbelief in the Bible creation account and, often, in the Bible itself.

Christians who take one of the Creationism viewpoints generally appreciate the scientists who are switching from Darwinian Evolution to Intelligent Design for explaining life on earth. However, Intelligent Design can also accommodate much that is non-Christian or even anti-Christian. Therefore, a Christian should believe in an intelligent Designer, but should not buy into all of the claims of the Intelligent Design movement.

Most Christians believe in one of the variations of Creationism. Each of the three variations include many strong and committed Christians who have well researched reasons for their beliefs. Unfortunately, some have taken the stand that only their viewpoint is Scripturally plausible.

Both Old Earth Creationism and Young Earth Creationism are compatible with the teachings we have in the Bible. Obviously, both cannot be equally true. However, there is just not enough definitive information to conclusively eliminate either one from consideration.

It is important to remember that in this context, Darwinian Evolution is the real enemy. While the various theories on the age of the earth are important, they are not essential for our Christian walk with Jesus.

Our Official Position

People who ask us about our creation viewpoint generally want to know what our official position is. Our official position is to not have an official position. There's simply not enough evidence to demand a verdict. Various creation viewpoints are presented above for your consideration.

Additional Information on the Web

Additional information on the various views of creation can be obtained from the following web sites. We do not agree with many of the viewpoints expressed by these sites.

Young Earth Creationism

Institute for Creation Research, founded by Henry Morris
<http://www.icr.org>

Answers in Genesis, founded by Ken Ham
<http://www.answersingenesis.org>

Old Earth Creationism: Day-Age Viewpoint

A Reason to Believe, founded by Hugh Ross
<http://www.reasons.org>

Answers in Creation, operated by Old Earth Ministries
<http://www.answersincreation.org>

Old Earth Creationism: Literal Six Days Viewpoint

Without Form and Void article by Arthur C Custance
<http://www.creationdays.dk/withoutformandvoid/Articles.php>

Gap Theory article by David F. Reagan
http://www.learnthebible.org/gap_or_not.htm