

LESSON 2 – Evolutionists Talking to Christians

(based on pp.3-69)



Introduction

Greg was raised in the Eastern Orthodox church. Nate was raised Southern Baptist. Elizabeth was raised Catholic. All three attempted to harmonize the Bible and science on the matter of the earth's perceived age. Greg's answer was to interpret Genesis chapter 1 symbolically. Nate concluded that the entire Bible was unnecessary to be a good person. In other words, he became an atheist and was no longer a Christian. Elizabeth lost all confidence in the Bible. In her own words, "If the Bible can't be taken literally, then what can you get out of it? I believe that there was a person, 'Jesus,' but if some things can't be taken literally, then what?" (p. 20). It seemed in her interview that Elizabeth still wanted to be a Christian, but she identified as an agnostic.

In the next lessons we will look at three key issues:

- How the word *day* is meant to be understood in Genesis chapter 1.
- Why a correct understanding of *day* in Genesis chapter 1 is important for our faith.
- How someone's worldview affects the way he or she looks at things (or why we can believe in the Bible and science at the same time).

How the word *day* is meant to be understood in Genesis 1

1. Two important rules govern the way we determine the meaning of words, whether in the Bible or any other document. How do we apply these rules as we read the Bible?
 - We look at the way a word is used in all its various contexts to determine its various meanings. We determine which useage is correct by re-examining how the word is used in its immediate context (including grammar, surrounding usage, and the author's flow of thought).
 - We take words literally unless the context clearly indicates that a word is being used figuratively (e.g. figures of speech, similies, metaphors, some idioms, visions/apocalyptic literature).

2 Peter 3:8-10 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

2. In English class, what do we call a figure of speech that uses the word *like* or *as*? What point is Peter making when he says that with the Lord a day is *like* a thousand years and a thousand years are *like* a day? In this context, what is the length of a day and what is the length of a thousand years?

In English, the word *day* in some contexts can refer to a period of time. For example, we might say, “In Abraham Lincoln’s day,” referring to that period when Lincoln lived or the time he was president. Whenever the Bible uses the word *day* to refer to a longer period of time, the word is always plural. For example, Jesus said, “In the *days* of Noah” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26). There were many days in Noah’s life. But even in this context, a day means a period of 24 hours and days simply a collection of them.

3. With what phrase does Genesis chapter 1 consistently describe each day of the week of creation?

Genesis 1:5, 8, 12-13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. ...God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day. ...The land produced vegetation... And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

4. What is the first function of the sun, moon, and stars?

Genesis 1:14-19 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

5. What is the second function of the sun, moon, and stars?

6. Why is it significant that God established the length of a day on day 4 and then created all living creatures on days 5 and 6?

7. If *day* in Genesis chapter 1 was symbolic for billions of years while God guided the geological and biological evolution of all things, what should he have put first in his creation account: day 4 or days 2 and 3?

8. How does the simple language of the Third Commandment (which was also recorded by Moses) make any other understanding of “day” in Genesis 1 nonsensical?

Exodus 20:1-11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien

within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.”

9. What is God’s verdict on changing his Word or our understanding of it in order to make it fit our way of thinking?

2 Peter 3:16 [Paul’s] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Why a correct understanding of *day* in Genesis chapter 1 is important for our faith

10. Why did God create the world in six days? Why didn’t he just instantly make everything all at once? To get to the answer, jot down what God made on each of the six days. Note the difference between the way God created plants and animals with the way he created humankind. What progression do you see that helps explain why God spread the creation over several days?

In an effort to reconcile evolution and Genesis chapter 1, some Christians have said that God created death as a natural step in life and used death and survival of the fittest as his tools to make all the various forms of life. They have also said that it was only after the fall into sin that God turned death into a punishment.

11. Compare the assumptions of theistic evolution (that God used the process of evolution to create the world) listed below to what God tells us in **Genesis 1:21,25** So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ...God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

- Everything needed to go through a process of gradual improvement over millions of years.
- Animals died because they had deficiencies or were incompatible with their environment.
- In a sense, suffering and death are good because God used them as tools to improve and create the world we now know.

12. **Genesis 1:29** Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” What does this say about animals being eaten by other animals?

13. When did God initiate death in the animal kingdom? Why?

Genesis 3:19 “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death.

14. When will the curse of death in the animal kingdom come to an end?

Revelation 20:14; 21:4 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. ...“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

15. Some people ask the hypothetical question, “If humankind had not fallen into sin and death had not come to the animal kingdom, wouldn’t the earth have become quickly overcrowded with animals and people?” How would you answer that question?

16. Greg justified taking Genesis chapter 1 as symbolic by citing some early church fathers, especially Augustine. How would you respond to Greg?

17. If Genesis chapters 1–3 are symbolic and life evolved through death and survival of the fittest, which teachings of the Bible would become nonsensical?

Genesis 3:14-15 So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Closing Thought