

Young-Earth Creationism Defies God's Prohibition

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

When adherents to young-earth creationism (YEC) assert that the earth was created in six 24-hour days about ten thousand years ago, they are making the following **four claims**:

1. Genesis chapter 1 teaches that creation happened recently and in rapid fashion.
2. For the reason that scientific researchers are like the rest of us, sinful; scientific knowledge must be deemed an unreliable indicator of the truth of the history of creation. Therefore science should be viewed with suspicion.¹
3. Because the Bible is the inspired and revealed Word of God the Creator, it alone is competent to educate finite and sinful humans about the origin of the cosmos.
4. Consequently the Bible deserves the **final** say about natural history despite science's reliable investigative methods with the assistance of trustworthy instruments.

One critical aspect of science is thereby undermined every time YECs assert the right of their *interpretation* of Genesis to trump the authority of scientifically-established facts.² This is especially so when the data that is in question has been roundly-confirmed by a broad range of testable astronomical observations which have absolutely nothing to do with Darwinism. To be both specific and relevant, in order for YECs to maintain their position, they must reject the 13.7 billion-year age of the cosmos³ despite the fact that that same data is embraced even by leading YEC scientists.⁴ The question then, which must logically follow from the YEC stance is: *"Is YECs' denigration of scientific authority authorized by the Scriptures on which they take their stance?"* The basic answer from the Bible is, absolutely not! To the contrary, insofar as YECs dismiss scientific facts on the grounds of their allegation that they conflict with their YEC interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, they are **employing a posture which the Bible expressly forbids**.

Not a single Bible passage authorizes or encourages pitting Scripture against the facts of nature. Indeed, in John 9 Jesus chastises His skeptical audience for their resistance to His *public* miracles. Further, in Romans 1:18-20 St. Paul condemns suppressing the witness of nature with respect to its bearing on God's existence. He writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

¹⁸ "For the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who, by their wickedness, suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ Ever since the creation of the world [God's] invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Notice the following five implications which follow from St. Paul's statement.

¹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). *The Natural Knowledge of God*. (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), 2013), p.43.

² "Christian theology asserts that Scripture, not science, has the final authority." *In Christ All Things Hold Together*. (LCMS, 2015), p.24

³ *The Natural Knowledge of God* (Op.cit. (1)) states that *"Advances in astronomy during the twentieth century...led to the discovery that the universe...is expanding. This and related discoveries suggested, by projecting backwards, the now generally accepted conclusion that the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past"* (p.59 n.215--boldface mine).

⁴ LCMS scientist John Klotz writes that our faith "cannot go contrary to science and reason and observation...There must be a basic unity between [scientific] facts and truth as it is given to us in revelation." *Modern Science and the Christian Life*. (Concordia, 1962), p.79; also 137f

1. The testimony of nature is truthful and therefore trustworthy (18, 20).
2. The testimony of nature is deemed to be an actual vehicle of revelation (in addition to Scripture) by which the truth of God's existence is conveyed (19).
3. On the basis of that revelation, God judges people to be "*without excuse*" insofar as they reject God's "*eternal power and deity*" in the face evidence that Paul declares to be true (19). It logically follows that were this testimony not actually trustworthy, then the charge of human culpability for unbelief in face of evidence would **be neither valid nor fair**.
4. Consequently, to underplay this evidence is to remove a vital aspect of God's convicting imperative (Romans 3:19-20) by which He confronts sinners with sinful dishonesty (20).
5. For these reasons it is "wickedness" to suppress the truth of nature (18).

My employment of strong language here is not intended to belittle the YEC's laudable desire to uphold biblical inspiration. Nevertheless, their zeal needs to be resisted for the reason of it being "unenlightened" (Romans 10:2). I judge this to be so on the grounds that their propensity to *selectively* suppress scientific data **contradicts Romans 1:18-20**. It should be acknowledged that this passage in fact surpasses all others in Scripture with respect to its clarification of the relationship between the witness of nature and the authority of God's Word. On the basis of this passage we are to regard the testimony of nature as one critical aspect of God's revelation with respect to His own "*eternal power and deity*."

It is urgent that the confusion over this relationship be clarified. One often hears that what a person believes about the length of the creation days and the age of the earth is not a saving matter. That is indeed true in the singular sense that no one is saved or lost for adhering to a particular view of creation. Yet in the context of proclaiming the Gospel to scientifically-informed people, the stakes are very high. Whenever Christians state that the Gospel is true, we are asserting that it is in *actual* harmony with the *whole* of reality.⁵ Consequently when YECs evade submitting the Bible to firmly-knowable facts of nature, they are casting doubt on the very Scriptures they seek to elevate. With respect to evangelization, the consequences lead to two harmful outcomes. Firstly it hinders God's law by which sinners are confronted with the illegitimacy of evading evidence that in fact points to God's existence. And it neglects to employ our most powerful scientific evidence favoring God's existence by its demonstration that our cosmos began out of utter nothingness in a manner that is, alone, consistent with Genesis 1:1.⁶