

Battle for the Beginning – Chapter 8
Man in God's Image
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I was expecting to provide a large rebuttal for this chapter on the creation of mankind, but as it turns out, MacArthur gives little evidence. The introduction speaks of man being in God's image, and forming man out of the dust of the ground. This presents no problems from an old earth perspective. The only thing of interest that I saw was the creation of Eve, using a rib from Adam. While this has no impact upon Progressive Creationists, it may have implications against theistic evolution. How can you maintain a literal reading of this account from an evolutionist view? Eve clearly being made from a rib of Adam prevents her from being a descendant of a previous, soul-less hominid. I'll leave this one for the theistic evolutionist to answer.

In the next paragraph on page 159, he hammers home the idea that it was all done in a single day. This is no problem, as a single "day" can represent long ages.

The rest of the introduction deals with the concept of the Trinity, which has no impact upon the age of creation.

To Bear the Creator's Image (Page 162)

This section is largely a God of the Gaps section. MacArthur does a good job of describing the phrase "the image of God" as it relates to man's creation, and he does so without any implications about old earth belief. There are only two passing references to evolution. On page 162, he says of man, "It is not a state into which lower creatures can evolve. This is not something that can be gained by a random mutation in the genetic code." For the theistic evolutionist, it is something that can be gained by a planned, directed mutation, with God providing the mutations in the entire evolutionary process.

In the discussion, he mentions our ethical, moral, and spiritual attributes, but I did not see him mentioning one thing...the fact that we have a free will, to choose our own path.

In the last paragraph, he says "Yet the doctrine of evolution would utterly erase this truth from the collective conscience of the human race. That is why the battle against evolutionary theory is one Christians cannot afford to abandon." The "truth" he alludes to is us being in God's image. Yes, there is a threat if one views it as a battle to be fought.

However, if one accepts theistic evolution, it is a moot point. God with evolution works just as well as God outside of evolution.

I've often said that evolution is not the enemy of the church...ignorance is. Young earth creationists are ignorant of proper biblical interpretation...they will only consider their own biased views of Scripture. Once you realize theistic evolution is a valid belief, resistance should cease.

To Propagate Life (Page 167)

MacArthur starts this section with an often used dirty tactic employed too frequently by young earth creationists...blame everything on evolution. He says "The evolutionary lie has brought even this under attack, as society now seeks to justify and legitimize fornication, easy divorce, homosexual relationships, and other perversions..." Evolution is a product of the 19th and 20th century. How long have fornication, divorce, homosexuals, and other perversions been with mankind? Ever since Adam sinned. Before evolution, these evils existed. We think they are more prevalent today, but this is a product of mass media...we see it more often due to television, radio, etc. Evolution is not responsible for causing people to sin. Answers in Genesis even tried to claim that murders are the direct result of evolution (see www.answersincreation.org/evo_sin.htm).

He spends the rest of this section talking about marriage and procreation. There are no problems presented that threaten an old earth. He does mention that after Adam was created, Adam named all the animals, prior to the creation of Eve. Remember the mayfly, with the five minute lifespan from the last chapter. Using a young earth model of no death before sin, Adam had less than five minutes to name every animal!

To Receive Divine Blessing (Page 170)

In the last paragraph on page 170, he mentions that there would be no carnivores...all the animals were tame and vegetarian. This is a direct requirement of the young earth theory of no physical death before sin. I do believe that these conditions applied in the Garden of Eden, but outside the gates of Eden, it was a different story.

God created a special place, called the Garden of Eden, and placed man there. What was special about this place? MacArthur describes the entire world, and everything in it, as special. If this were true, what is special about Eden? Why didn't God just put Adam down anywhere on the planet...after all, it was all considered a perfect paradise. Here's why...when man sinned, he had to be kicked out of paradise. He had to know what he had, and what he had lost, through his sin. If the entire world were perfect like Eden, then where would God exile man to? Would he have kicked man onto the Moon, or Mars? There had to be a perfect Eden, and then the rest of the world.

What was the rest of the world? It was created perfectly for what it was...a self-renewing ecosystem, capable of renewal through the process of death and decay and the food chain. God had foreknowledge of man's fall, thus He created the world for the conditions after the fall of man. This scenario is a perfect explanation for why God placed Adam in the perfect Garden of Eden.

You may be saying, "But what about Romans 8:20-22?" This passage says the entire creation was affected by the fall. By the model I explain above, only the Garden is affected after the fall. Not so. Man himself is the affliction of creation. Through man's misuse of our earthly resources, through our sinful pursuits and lusts, we damage creation, turning God's perfectly functioning ecosystem into one that is trash-laden with human intervention. Don't get me wrong...I'm not a tree-hugger...but I realize that mankind, afflicted with sin, is the main danger to our planet. If man were not here, the ecosystem would go on existing in perfect balance for millennia.

Moving on, MacArthur on page 171 mentions one of my favorite verses. Here is Genesis 2:17:

¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

This verse is critical to a proper understanding of the Fall of Man. Young earth creationists say that physical and spiritual death occurred when Adam ate the fruit. I say that only spiritual death occurred. What does the Bible say? The above verse gives the answer.

Young earth creationists always say that a straight-forward reading of the days of creation in Genesis will always be understood as 24-hour days. This is the "grandmother argument." Would an 80-year-old grandmother reading Genesis One conclude anything other than 24-hour days? Probably not...she is not examining all the evidence. Let's take this straight-forward reading rule, and apply it to Genesis 2:17. According to this verse, it says that "*in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*" Would our 80-year-old grandmother assume that Adam should have died the same day he ate the fruit? Yes! There is no other way to conclude otherwise...Adam would have to physically die the same day he ate the fruit. However, he did not! Adam did not die physically on the day he ate it. What did change this day? Adam died spiritually...he sinned, and thus separated himself from the love of God through that act of sin. To live in sin is spiritual death. This is the type of death God was saying would happen in Genesis 2:17. Adam lived on for hundreds of years.

You cannot say God meant physical death would eventually come on the human race as a result of this fall. Genesis 2:17 clearly says Adam would have died that day if that were the case. There's no way around this conclusion.

There is one other logical point concerning this topic. Can physical death separate us from God? The answer from Romans 8:39 is no;

³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Adam's physical death would not separate him from God...only spiritual death would. If physical death could not separate Adam from God, then the only logical conclusion is that only spiritual death occurred at the moment of the Fall.

To Rule Creation (Page 171)

It is interesting to note that according to MacArthur, there were no weeds in the world (page 172). However, there are no useless weeds. God created each plant with a purpose. A "weed" is an unwanted plant in your garden. Sure, we could all do without poison ivy, but nonetheless it was created by God, and as such its design gives praise to the creator. With that said, maybe there were no "weeds" in the Garden of Eden...but then again, this was a perfect place, separate from the conditions outside of the Garden.

Not much else in the rest of the chapter is important for old earth creationists. He goes on with the death theme, which has been adequately discussed already.