

Young Earth Creationism: A Foundational Truth That Must be Preserved

Or, YEC: Part of a Thoroughly Biblical Christianity.

By a non-fundamentalist fundamentalist.

Pastor Matt Postiff, Ph.D., Th.M.

Thanks

- To Pastor Mike Harding and First Baptist Church of Troy, Michigan for hosting the conference.
- To Pastor Mark Buhr, Steve Thomas, Art Larson and Glen Currie for organizing the conference.

What The Bible Says

- “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and Your outstretched arm!”
- “And God said...and it was so...” (8x, more or less)
- “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.”
- “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.”
- “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men...”
- “When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age...the son of Adam, the son of God.”
- “...by the word of God...the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.”
- God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

Therefore, We Believe

We should derive our understanding as directly from the Biblical text as possible.

- God created everything; no spontaneous generation.
- Creation was a miracle, vis-à-vis anti-supernaturalism.
- Creation was a direct act of God; no evolutionary means.
- Creation took six days.
- The first man Adam was a real man.
- Creation was recent (thousands of years).
- Creation was followed by a global catastrophic flood.
- Creation was perfect (no sin or death).

Name of This View

- Young Earth Creationism is the common name.
 - The name tells us the earth is young.
- We are talking about three young ages actually:
 - The age of the universe
 - The age of the earth
 - The age of mankind

Parts of This Presentation

1. What is YEC?
2. Is YEC Truly a Necessary Foundational Doctrine?
3. What Do we Do About YEC and Separation?

But First...A Biographical Note

- Science and engineering, University of Michigan
- Specialized in computer microprocessor design (B.S.E., M.S.E., Ph.D. → almost 10 years!)
- Independent consultant 5 years
- M.Div., Th.M. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary
- Pastoral ministry 6+ years
- This background provides a unique perspective on science and theology

...And a Word of Exhortation

- No reason for you to be intimidated by science
- Scientists:
 - Are sinners just like the rest of us and suffer the noetic effects of sin (total depravity).
 - Have their own presuppositions.
 - Are under great pressure to produce new work...
 - ...and to conform to expected norms in their field.
- Data is often “massaged” to get it where it needs to be
 - Witness “Climategate” at University of East Anglia.

Young Earth Creationism: What is it not?

Non-Essential Conditions

- ...to believe in an exact age of the earth, “6,000 years”, or “Ussher’s Chronology”. Dogmatism on the precise age is not necessary as long as the age is “young.”
- ...to believe in the water vapor canopy theory.
- ...to believe that the second law of thermodynamics started at the Fall.
- ...to believe that the speed of light has changed or that the universe is a particular (small) size or that time dilation accounts for the appearance of age or that radioactive half-lives have changed.
- ...to believe that angels were created at a particular point in the creation week.

Non-Essential Conditions, II

- ...to believe that God only created fresh water and not salt water.
- ...to believe a particular view on the initial light source used during the first three days.
- ...to believe a particular identification of “evening and morning” in the six days.
- ...to know the answer of every possible question that may be raised about creationism.
- ...to abandon true science or be intellectually backward.

Young Earth Creationism: What is it?

The *Sine Qua Nons* of YEC

1. Hermeneutic: Literal
2. Method: Direct acts of God
3. Duration: Six consecutive 24-hr days
4. Age: 6,000 to 10,000 Years
5. Theology: Literal Adam and Death Only After the Fall
6. Geology: Global Catastrophic Flood

What is *Sine Qua Nons*?

- *Sine qua non* is a Latin term that means an essential element or indispensable condition.
- If any of the conditions are removed, the explanation no longer belongs in the YEC fold.
- How determine what should be included as essential?

Hermeneutic: Considerations

- Goal: Arrive at the meaning of the text
- Meaning is constrained by:
 - Biblical text: the meaning is in the text.
 - Author's intent.
 - Stability: meaning *is* what it *was*—it does not change.
 - Lexicography: words have meaning, only one per context.
 - Grammar: word forms and arrangement.
 - Context: limits the semantic range of words.
 - Theology: Meaning cannot be contradicted by other Scripture.
 - Genre/form: Narrative, poetry, epistle, parable affects meaning
 - History: historical and cultural setting are factors.

Hermeneutic: Consistent Literalism

- Literalism gathers several streams of thought:
 - Bible Examples: Neh. 8:8; Num. 12:8; Hab 2:2; John 16:25, 29; Prov. 8:8-9; Deut. 27:8; Ezra 4:18.
 - Image of God in man and the expected normal use of language to communicate propositions.
 - Inspiration: God's meaning and authority in the Scripture.
 - Perspicuity: Scripture is essentially clear (Ps. 119:105, 2 Peter 3:16—"some things hard to understand" but not all).
 - Axiomatic: a presupposition needed to communicate.
- The plainest sense is the right sense
 - A day should be considered a 24-hour day unless impossible
 - A figure of speech is more plain than its "woodenly literal" counterpart.

Hermeneutic: Genesis 1-11

- Genesis 1-11 are, beyond reasonable dispute, narrative.
 - This includes Genesis 1-2
 - This has been demonstrated by Boyd's statistical analysis and McCabe's grammatical analysis.
- Determine if someone's view of Genesis is literal by noting if they say the text is:
 - Structured Narrative – the plainest understanding.
 - Poetry – passage is taken figuratively.
 - Exalted prose – room for figurative interpretation in the “exalted” part. This view confuses form with content.

Method: Direct, aka Immediate

- AA opposed to a drawn out naturalistic process such as evolution.
 - The fiats are presented as being followed immediately by the fulfillments.
 - God created the material world, then extracted from it immediate obedience to His spoken command.
- The text is full of the miraculous, not the natural
 - Despite Kline's "because it had not rained" argument at Gen 2:5
- Much of creation was *ex nihilo*; some was *creatio ex materia* (Adam, Eve, and land animals, 2:7, 2:21-22, 2:19).

Duration: 6 Consecutive 24-Hr days

- Primary biblical source for this point is Genesis 1:1-31.
- In OT Hebrew, *day* is always a literal day when singular and not part of a compound form (Gen. 2:4).
- “Evening and morning” further limit the extent of *day*
- Numeric qualifier on *day* always indicates a literal day
- Bible parallels: Exodus 20:11, 31:17.
- Order and survival of creation depends on short *day*.
 - Day 3 creations would soon require creations on Day 4-6 creations in order to survive.

Age: 6,000 to 10,000 Years

- The primary biblical sources for this point are the genealogies of Genesis 5, 11, and Luke 3.
- Freeman shows that there are several types of genealogies in the Bible.
 - He follows work by Samuel Kulling, Brevard Childs, David Rosevear, and James Jordan.
 - Genesis 5 and 11 are “chrono-genealogies” specifically intended to say something about chronology.
 - Gaps are few (if any) in this type of genealogy.
 - Freeman in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, pp. 290-92.

Theology: Death Only After the Fall

- This essential comes from the analogy of Scripture.
- The primary biblical source for this point is Romans 5:12-21.
- The Scripture teaches that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin.”
- This is particularly where creation becomes a gospel-related issue. Without Genesis 1-3 intact, we have no real need of the gospel.

Geology: Global Flood of Noah

- The Flood was global
 - “All” the high mountains “everywhere”...covered (7:19)
 - “All” flesh that moved on the earth perished (7:21)
- The Flood was catastrophic (i.e., a disaster)
- The Flood remade the entire topography of the earth
 - This is the basis of an effective answer to the “geologic ages” argument that is so pervasive in modern scientific thought.
- Like Creation, the Flood was a miraculous intrusion of God into the normal way of things.

Contrasting YEC to Other Views

Evangelical Explanation	Fails YEC-Essentials
Gap View	M*, D*, A, T
Day-Age View	H, M, D, A, T
Limited Geography	H, D, A
Framework View	H, practically M, D, A, T
Theistic Evolution	H, M, D, A, T
Progressive Creationism	H, M, D, A, T
Intelligent Design	H, practically M, D, A, T
Days of Revelation	H, M, D, A, T

Interacting with Other Views

- Underlying contention of other views: Science *has* to be right. YEC is unscientific and *cannot* be right.
- Non-literal views do some unnatural stretch of the text to fit or allow for the above presupposition:
 - Gap: *without form and void*; verb for create; *was=became*
 - Day-Age: word for *day* is stretched to long ages
 - Limited Geography: *land* is changed mid-stream
 - Framework: narrative turned into literary frames
 - Days of Revelation: narrative stretched into meta-narrative

Young Earth Creationism: Is It Really Necessary?

Theology Affected by Creation

- Anthropology: origin and constitution of man.
- Hamartiology: origin and nature of sin, death
- Bibliology:
 - Interpretation of the parts of the Bible vastly different (hermeneutical consistency);
 - Authority and perspicuity of Scripture;
 - Sufficiency of Scripture (science needed?);
 - Inerrancy at stake (degrees?).
- Theology proper: goodness of God in the original creation.
- Soteriology: first Adam; need for salvation.

What if No YEC Foundation?

- No first man or original transgression or Adamic imputation?
- Death is not a result of sin?
- Was original creation really good?
- No need of salvation?
- Piper's view recognizes the above problems, but erodes Biblical authority by relying on depraved scientific authority.

What if No YEC Foundation? II

- Ultimately a non-literal view, when taken to its logical conclusion, will have to abandon the text of Scripture.
 - The revealed order of creation is diametrically opposed to the scientific order.
- Why hold to any part of the Bible against science or the establishment conclusions?
- Without YEC as part of doctrinal foundation, we are left standing upon sand.

Is YEC Necessary?

- The idea seems all too commonplace that...
 - Since believing YEC is not necessary to be saved (true)
 - Then we don't have to worry about it (false)
 - It is not a fundamental, right?
- We must stop asking “Do I have to believe this?”
- And we must start asking “Should I believe this to be faithful to God?”
 - Given clarity of Bible here, YES, we should!
- Believing incorrectly on YEC is not a fatal sin, but it is still a sin.

Young Earth Creationism: Do We Separate Over It?

What is Fundamentalism?

- More than just “fundamentals.” Those are the basics.
- Beale’s definition: unqualified acceptance of and obedience to the scriptures.
- Fundamentalism is also marked by a belief in separation.
 - Separation over gospel issues (2 John 10).
 - Separation over non-gospel issues (such as behavioral issues).
 - From professing believers or unbelievers.

Fundamentalist Movement?

- There is no coherent movement today.
 - No *Separation Today*.
 - No widely recognized “fundamentalist” conference.
- Neither should there be one.
 - The Bible does not endorse “movement building.”
 - We are here to carry out the Great Commission through evangelism and planting of local churches.
 - The Church is God’s centerpiece in this age.
 - Any associations should serve to strengthen the work of the local church.
 - Don’t lose sight of the God-given goals.

The Label Issue

- Labels don't work too well because:
 - They are defined differently by different people.
 - They do not fit the post-modern mindset.
 - Example: The Gospel Coalition rationale includes the idea: – “not having to decide exactly who is ‘in’ and ‘out.’”
 - Example: CE includes YEC and non-YEC types.
- I do not prefer the label “fundamentalist.”
 - Cultural and theological overtones that are unhelpful.
- I'd rather promote a “thoroughly Biblical Christianity” and not worry so much about the labels.

YEC and Conservative Evangelicals

- Is there a difference with Conservative Evangelicals?
- Is the difference significant enough to do something about?

Conservative Evangelical Views

- John MacArthur: YEC
- J. Ligon Duncan III – YEC
 - “We are better to take the passage at face value.”
- John Piper
 - Most comfortable with John Sailhamer’s historical creationism or “limited geography” view
 - Creation of all things 1:1; preparation of the land 1:2-2:24
 - Earth is old; man is young; essentially a gap view
 - OK with multiple views (e.g., YEC, day-age)

Conservative Evangelical Views

- R. C. Sproul : YEC, switched from Framework and evolution; not dogmatic on the age of the earth
- Al Mohler: YEC
- Mark Dever: non-committal
- Timothy Keller - Theistic evolution and Framework
 - “Something out of nothing...order out of chaos”
- Wayne Grudem – Day-age view and old earth
 - Young and old are both valid options
 - Earth’s age not important; focus on common ground

Broader Evangelical Views

- Tremper Longman: Old earth; Adam not necessary
- Bruce Waltke – Pre-creation chaos (a gap view)

Some Conservative Evangelicals

- Reductionist tendency in terms of doctrine.
 - There seems to be a notion that if we are OK on the gospel, everything else is secondary.
 - Do we get this idea from the Bible?
 - This is not a thoroughly Biblical Christianity.
- Academic emphasis.
 - Must remain open to have doctrines to “talk about.”
- Inconsistent practice of separation.
- Still have roots in their new evangelical background.

Some Conservative Evangelicals

- They are stuck trying to figure out how to fit science and Scripture together.
- They have “two bosses” that are conflicting their theology.
 - Gould’s idea of NOMA expresses these two “non overlapping” authorities.
 - But we are not dealing with a bifurcated reality.
 - There is a single reality that came from one God.
- In the end, science ends up trumping Scripture for those who deny a literal interpretation.

So Is There a Difference?

- *Absolutely* there is a big difference.
- For non-YEC types (CE or not), there is a belief problem which is a sin problem.
- The non-YEC treatment of the Bible in Genesis 1-2 is not a hallmark of belief.
 - It is not rank unbelief, but it is not a mark of a submitted, faithful interpreter whose rule of faith and practice is the Bible alone.
- YEC is foundational to the gospel!

Should We Separate over YEC?

- The implications are severe enough and the fellowship broken enough that there has to be separation.
- Do we separate from a lazy brother? 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15.
- Do we separate over someone who knowingly denies a clear Biblical teaching? We should.
- Does this mean we treat them as an enemy? No.
- Do I invite them to influence my church? No.
- We don't endorse their theology or the way they look at the Bible. Under the similarities there are deep differences.

Poll: 4 in 10 Americans Believe Creationism

- “A new Gallup poll reveals that 40 percent of Americans believe in creationism – that is, that God created humans in their present form about 10,000 years ago.”
- Decrease from 2008: 44%
- Secular Evolution: increased to 16%
- Theistic Evolution: steady at 38%
- Poll taken Dec. 10-12, 2010, with a random sample of 1,019 adults, aged 18 and older.

Poll: 4 in 10 Americans Believe Creationism

- Of churchgoers: 47% theistic evolution
- Of non-churchgoers: 39% theistic evolution
- Of postgraduates: 49% theistic evolution
- Of postgraduates: 25% secular evolution
- Of college grads: 38% theistic evolution
- Of college grads: 37% creationism
- Less educated tend to believe in creationism
- From www.christianpost.com/article/20101219/poll-4-in-10-americans-believe-in-creationism/, Nathan Black, Dec 19, 2010

Reading List

- Andrew Kulikovsky, *Creation, Fall, Restoration: A Biblical Theology of Creation*, 2009.
- Mortenson & Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, 2008.
- Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory*, 1976.
- Andrew A. Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, 2 vols., 2009.
- Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 1961.