



# 8

# Creation Compromise

## Key Themes

- The Bible tells us how God created the universe.
- The Bible records actual history.

## Key Passages

- Genesis 1–2; Mark 1:14–15; Acts 20:17–21

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the basic Christian positions on the creation of the universe and life on earth.
- Distinguish between the issues of authority and salvation with respect to the doctrine of creation.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Write on the board, “Can someone believe in evolution and be saved?”

Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 1, Mark 1:14, and Acts 20:17 in their Bibles.



### Studying God's Word

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As we are confronted with claims about the origin of the universe and the life in it, we must look to Scripture as the first and final authority. Many Christians try to add ideas of long ages and evolutionary thinking to the biblical history of the earth. The church must respond to these issues in a biblical manner.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Christian Views on Creation worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



### Comparing Creation Views

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Students will listen to descriptions and watch a video segment comparing the various views on creation held by Christians.

- Print one Compromise Positions sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM. Cut the three descriptions apart.
- DVD player and TV or computer
- Preview the video clip, “What’s Wrong with Progressive Creation?” (4:05) on the Resource DVD-ROM.



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this week's lesson, read Genesis 1–2; Mark 1:14–15; Acts 20:17–21.

Where Scripture speaks clearly on topics, we have no need to explain away those truths—unless some other source becomes our authority. The opening chapters of Genesis speak clearly about the origin of the universe and the method God used to create it. Using the genealogies in Scripture we can conclude the approximate age of the earth. Using the New Testament, we can confirm that Adam and Eve were actual people whom God created.

If we use Scripture as our starting point, and take the Bible as written, we would never come to the conclusion that the universe is billions of years old or that an evolutionary process resulted in life on earth. We would never consider that cancer, death, and diseases—all preserved in the fossil record—were present for billions of years before Adam sinned. We would never consider that Adam and Eve were not actual people or that their creation did not happen as recorded. To come to these conclusions, we must bring ideas into the Bible and ask, “What has God said . . . ?”

Questioning the foundational book of the Bible, especially its opening chapters, allows questions about the rest of the Bible. Questioning the historicity of Adam and Eve directly impacts the believability of the message of the gospel. Paul makes the connection between Adam and the gospel very clear in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. The salvation that is found in Jesus, the “last Adam,” was made necessary because of the sin of the first man, Adam. This doctrine is at the heart of the gospel and is a major challenge facing the church today.

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The attempts to reconcile a world that is believed to be millions or billions of years old have resulted in a variety of views. The following views represent popular views apart from biblical creation. All are attempts to

accommodate the interpretation of an earth that is millions or billions of years old.

### Gap Theory

Although there are variations, the basic teaching of the gap theory is that millions of years ago God created the universe and everything in it as recorded in Genesis 1:1. Sometime during the subsequent millions of years, Lucifer (i.e., Satan) rebelled and was thrown to earth. This resulted in Lucifer's flood, which destroyed all plant and animal life on earth, thus producing the fossil record in the rock layers.

At the same time as this flood, the earth was plunged into darkness and thus became “without form and void” as recorded in Genesis 1:2. The gap theory teaches that the fossils found in the earth's crust are relics of the originally perfect world that God created, which was supposedly destroyed before the six literal days of creation (or re-creation) recorded in Genesis 1:3–31.

This view was proposed by Thomas Chalmers in the early 1800s to accommodate the scientific ideas of millions of years. It has been popularized by resources such as the Scofield Study Bible. Typically, the age of the earth and universe are left to “science” to determine, but biological evolution is rejected.

### Progressive Creation

Progressive Creation is a relatively recent idea that seeks to embrace the big bang as the origin of the universe and to allow for the geological evolution of the earth, but it rejects the biological evolution of life on earth. This view suggests that God created life in spurts and allowed many species to go extinct to be recreated in slightly different forms over billions of years. The days of creation were actually overlapping periods of time during which God created different life forms.

Proponents of this view consider nature to be the “sixty-seventh book of the Bible” and look to that book to teach them about human origins and the history of the earth and universe. The rock layers contain a record of the history of life on earth including pre-humans who did not have a spirit yet strongly resembled humans. The rocks also contain evidence of death, disease, and

suffering. The Flood was a local event that is referred to as “universal” because it impacted all humans on the earth at the time.

The view has been popularized by Hugh Ross and the organization Reasons to Believe and is supported by several Christian leaders.

### Theistic Evolution

This view is the broadest and includes such diverse ideas that it is hard to define strictly. All theistic evolutionists agree that the secular explanations of the age of the universe and earth are accurate and that the Flood was a local event. All agree that life on earth has evolved from simple organisms. But some believe God created that first spark of life while others believe it happened “naturally” according to the laws God ordained for the universe. Some accept that God had no intervening role in the evolution of life while others see God guiding the process at important steps.

Most agree that humans evolved from previous hominids and God “injected” a spirit into man at some point. Others believe all life was allowed to evolve and at a certain point God specially created Adam and Eve as the first humans. Regardless, the disease, death, and struggle to survive were part of God’s original plan for the creation. The days of Genesis 1 are viewed as poetic expressions of the vast ages of earth’s history (a day-age interpretation), and there was never a globe-covering Flood.

The day-age view was popularized by Hugh Miller in the early 1800s at the same time Chalmers was espousing the gap theory. As Darwin introduced ideas on biological evolution, those explanations were incorporated into the day-age views and have continued today. Organizations like the Discovery Institute and BioLogos sponsor teachers who teach various forms of theistic evolution.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With few exceptions, Christians until the eighteenth century believed that the earth was young based on the biblical descriptions. It was not until those

studying the geology of the earth began to question the age of the earth that these ideas entered the church. Many assume that Darwin was the catalyst for this idea moving into the church, but it happened long before Origin of Species was published.

As a result of the suggestion that the earth is millions of years old from people like Charles Lyell, leaders within the church started to teach those ideas and reinterpret the clear teaching of Scripture. This is when ideas like the gap theory and day-age views began to creep into the church. “Science” was given a position of authority over Scripture with respect to the age of the earth and the days of creation.

While some within the church rejected biological evolution and embraced the idea of long ages of history (Charles Spurgeon would be an example), there were those who stood against the corrupting influences. One group is known as the scriptural geologists, and they used Scripture to combat the old-age interpretation of the rock layers. This battle continues today as the church faces the corrupting influence of adding worldly wisdom to the Word of God. Jesus will build His church, and the wisdom of hell and the world will not prevail against it!

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



### BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, I know that you have given me your Word so that I would have everything I need in order to trust and obey you. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Help me to have great confidence in your guidance through Scripture and to pass along that confidence to those I teach. Help us to show honor to you through studying and valuing your Word. I pray that all of us will come to recognize the truthfulness of your Word, not only about the heavenly things, but about the earthly things, too.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.



## Review

Last week we spent our time thinking about our God-given role as stewards of the earth and all of its resources. We looked primarily at the commands from Genesis to subdue the earth and take dominion over the earth and all of the things living on it.

? Who could give us a summary of our role, as we defined it from Scripture last week?

*Allow responses.*

We were also reminded from Scripture about the faithfulness of God to continue to uphold this earth—and all of His

creation—as He promised to Noah thousands of years ago. Despite rising and falling temperatures and sea levels over the millennia, God has His hand on the thermostat and has absolute, sovereign control over this earth. While we are to be responsible for the way we use resources, there is not even a solid scientific consensus that human activity is causing the increased temperatures. We need to take care to validate ideas from science, especially secular sources, with what Scripture teaches.



➤ Write on the board, “Can someone believe in evolution and be saved?”

➤ Have students use bookmarks to mark Genesis 1, Mark 1:14, and Acts 20:17 in their Bibles.



## Studying God’s Word

This week’s lesson is going to serve as a bit of a recap of our lessons on God’s creative acts described in Genesis. Within the Christian community, there are a variety of views on the issue of creation. In fact, some of you in this room, or your parents, may very well not agree with some of the ideas we have been talking about.

Today’s lesson is intended to give a snapshot of the various views that believers hold to regarding God’s timing and method of creation. It is important for us to understand that many people have not taken time to think through these issues or they have been taught that there is no conflict between believing in evolution or the big bang and what the Bible teaches.

We need to know why we believe what we believe. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us to “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you . . .” I hope you will come away from today’s lesson with a better understanding of the different views and a sure understanding of the Bible’s teaching on the issues.

### READ THE WORD

*Pass out the Christian Views on Creation worksheet to each student. This worksheet will serve as a place for you to take notes as we talk about these ideas. We are going to be talking about broad categories of thinking today, so please don’t take offense if I describe something that you believe and place you in a category that you may have specific differences with. There are lots of*

different versions of these broad categories, so be careful not to assume that somebody believes exactly what we include in these categories today.

When we think about worldviews, a topic we have discussed in the past, there are ultimately only two—there is a God who has made the universe or there is not. We are going to set aside the atheistic view of the origin of the universe today and just look at the different views held by Christians.

Let's read Genesis 1:1–8 together to remind us of the general pattern of creation described there. We have read Genesis 1–2 several times in the last few weeks, so keep it in mind as we answer the questions. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

## Genesis 1:1–8

### EXAMINE THE WORD

With that text and what we have studied previously, let's ask some questions about the text itself to set up the four views we will talk about today.

#### Observe the Text

- ? From looking at the text alone, is there a gap of time between verses 1 and 2? *There is nothing in the text that indicates a gap.*
- ? From the text alone, is there any reason to think that the days are overlapping periods of time? *No, the days are described as having a beginning and an end in progression.*
- ? As you think about Genesis 1 and 2, is there any reason from the text alone to think that these events happened over millions or billions of years? *Nothing from the text would suggest this is the case.*
- ? Is there anything in the text alone of Genesis 1–2 that would indicate that mankind evolved from earlier hominid creatures? *No, Adam and Eve were made directly by God.*

➤ It is important to identify repeated elements in the text.

#### Discover the Truth

These are the basic questions that would relate to the views we are going to discuss today. We always want to make sure that we begin with the text of Scripture when we examine various views.

You can see the four basic Christian views here on the worksheet. They are separated into two broad categories—an earth that is billions of years old or an earth that is about 6,000 years old. Within the old earth view, there are several different ways to attempt to align the Bible with the secular ideas of millions of years.

Historically, these ideas were introduced in the early 1800s as geologists began suggesting that the earth was millions of years old. Before this time, almost all Christians believed the young-earth view. Theologian Thomas Chalmers suggested that there was a gap between the first two verses of

Genesis 1. This idea was popularized as a reference in the Scofield Study Bible. His contemporary, Hugh Miller, thought it made more sense that the days of Genesis 1 were long ages. Both of these ideas grew in popularity and different forms of each have been taught since then.



## Comparing Creation Views

### MATERIALS

- Compromise Positions descriptions, cut apart
- "What's Wrong with Progressive Creation?" video clip from the Resource DVD-ROM
- DVD player and TV or computer

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Pass out the Compromise Positions descriptions for several students to read.*

**We are going to take a few minutes to look at each of these ideas and fill in this chart to give you a quick comparison.** *Have the students read each description and then fill in the blanks on the chart. Show the video "What's Wrong with Progressive Creation?" if you have time.*

**Now that we have filled in those areas, see how much of the first column you can fill in based on what we have learned in the**

**last seven lessons.** *Use the answer key to help them complete the missing information after a few minutes.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? **Is the gap theory a view based on Scripture or ideas from outside of Scripture?** *It is an attempt to add the ideas of secular geologists into Scripture.*
- ? **Does the progressive creation view come from the text or from outside of the text?** *There is nothing in the text to suggest the days of creation were overlapping periods or that God created various creatures in phases.*
- ? **Are the ideas of theistic evolution based on what Scripture teaches or on modern secular thinking?** *They are based on secular thinking and seek to interpret the Bible in light of secular ideas rather than understanding science from a biblical perspective.*

These are broad categories and many people mix different parts of these ideas together. For example, some may believe that God used the big bang and evolutionary processes to create the universe, but that mankind was specially created in the last 10,000 years. There are many groups and individuals who are actively working to persuade Christians to accept these various views.

BioLogos is one institution that promotes the idea that Christians must accept the big bang and evolution. There are scholars in this group who openly teach that Adam and Eve were not the first parents of all humans, but that the account of Adam and Eve is a nice story to give the Israelites a history. Many claim that to reject evolution is to reject the foundation of science and to make Christianity like a cult.

These views are prevalent in the church today and spreading through Christian colleges and seminaries. An editorial in the June 2011 issue of *Christianity Today* (p. 61) that stated that we should be patient and let the theologians do some “creative thinking” to resolve the issue of the historicity of Adam and Eve.

We don’t need creative thinking! We need to trust the Word of God! When we attempt to make the thinking of the world line up with Scripture, it is most often Scripture that gets rewritten to accommodate the tension. This is an issue of authority. Is it God’s Word or man’s word (modern secular thinking) that is going to be our final authority?



## READ THE WORD

Let’s read these two passages of Scripture together to make sure we understand this issue rightly in the scope of eternity. *Assign students to read the passages aloud.*

Mark 1:14–15;  
Acts 20:17–21

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

? What did Jesus openly proclaim as He began preaching in Galilee? *Repent and believe the gospel.*

➤ Identify key words from the passage.

- ? What did Paul preach and teach among the Ephesians? *Repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- ? Does Jesus or Paul attach a belief in a young earth to the proclamation of the gospel? *No.*

### Discover the Truth

The point of looking at these passages is to remind us that salvation from our sins comes through repentance and faith, not in a certain belief in origins. We must take care not to judge the salvation of others based on secondary issues. We are called to examine the fruit of one another's lives and exhort one another to trust in sound doctrine.

While this issue is not a salvation issue, it is an issue of authority. If someone openly rejects the authority of the Bible on issues like the historicity of Adam and Eve or blends the ideas of evolution together with Scripture, there is reason for concern. If we don't believe God's Word beginning in Genesis, then when do we start believing it? If this history in Genesis is not reliable, then how do we know the gospel based on that history is reliable?

This is an issue of authority and the extent to which we will use the Bible to inform our thinking about the world. That is the significance of the issue—what will be the authority in your life?



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

I hope that you have at least a basic grasp on the different views that we have explored today. This is not intended to give you ammunition to shoot against those who hold different views. It is to help you understand the importance of holding fast to the authority of God's Word.

If we start with the imperfect, fallible ideas of mankind rather than the perfect Word of God, we will be misled. If we begin to open the door of questioning the creation of the universe and the life in it, what other doctrines will be reinterpreted by the modern secular thinking of our day?

### GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Let's think about how we can apply this thinking to our lives and conversations that we have with others.

? If we accept that secular “scientific” thinking (allowing for only natural explanations) is the filter we should use to understand the Bible, what other doctrines or events might be in danger? *Naturalistic science would reject: the idea that there was an original pair of people; that Noah gathered representatives of all the animals on the earth; that Noah could build such a large boat; that the entire world was flooded; that Noah and his sons could have fathered the current population; that men (prophets) can hear from God; that Jesus was born of a virgin; that Christ rose from the dead; that miracles can be performed; etc.*

? How do we decide which of these doctrines or events are so important that we must cling to them as part of orthodox Christianity? *Scripture should be our guide and we should cling to those that are clearly taught. If science “tells” us that the human population must have started with 10,000 people about 100,000 years ago, then should we also listen to science when it “tells” us that dead people don’t come to life? Many people pick and choose which parts of the Bible they want to trust. For example, they accept the Resurrection but reject the special creation of the world or Adam and Eve. This is an inconsistent position to hold—a double-minded way to look at the Bible.*

One of the key doctrines of Christianity is the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3–4). Many people who hold to these views we have talked about today would say they believe Scripture is sufficient.

? How would they have to define sufficiency in order to accept theistic evolution or the gap theory? *Sufficiency would have to be restricted to “spiritual” things and not the earthly things. However, Jesus told Nicodemus that if he couldn’t believe the earthly things, then how could he believe the heavenly things (John 3:12)?*

? Suppose your friend comes to you and asks, “I am hearing that there are many Christians that say God could have used the big bang and evolution to create the universe. Is that something that I should believe?” How would you respond? *Discuss various answers, but stressing the importance of looking to the Bible for authority.*

One of the most important questions surrounding the view of the early chapters of Genesis is the question of the origin of death. From a biblical perspective, Adam’s sin brought death into God’s “very good” creation.

? How do the various views we have discussed today reconcile this problem? *There must have been death before sin in all of the views apart from biblical creation. Many will argue that only human death is significant and that animal death could be part of a very good creation. Others will say that God intended the death and disease and suffering that is evident in the fossil record before man to bring about humans, so it is “very good” that things died so that we could evolve. Many people have never considered this issue, so it can be a very important part of a discussion on the various compromise views.*





## MEMORY VERSE

**Exodus 20:11** 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. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.



## GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for giving us His Word to study and learn from.
- Ask God to help each person to understand the importance of looking to the Bible as the absolute authority.
- Pray that God will open the eyes of those who look to secular thinking as the authority.