

LEONARD R. BRAND & RICHARD M. DAVIDSON



100 MILLION YEARS
OR 5000 YEARS?

Choose You This Day

Why It Matters
What You Believe
About Creation



Pacific Press[®]
Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho | Oshawa, Ontario, Canada
www.pacificpress.com

Cover design by Steve Lanto

Cover design resources from Leonard Brand, who assumes all responsibilities for securing art rights.

Inside design by Kristin Hansen-Mellish

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ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-4434-5

ISBN 10: 0-8163-4434-5

13 14 15 16 17 • 5 4 3 2 1

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all who are seeking to
know the truth about our Creator.

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PREFACE

Two friends examined a group of fossil trees in Wyoming, pondered their meaning—and arrived at diametrically opposed conclusions! Both were trained scientists. They carefully used the methods of geological research to understand the fossil trees. One decided the evidence he gathered from those fossil trees meant the biblical story of Creation and subsequent earth history was a myth. The other considered what the Bible says about the origin of this world to be reliable. So he took the apparent contradiction between the Bible and the current geological interpretation as a call for more study of the geological facts. He did the research, and his findings were accepted for publication in a scientific journal.

How can the same information lead two people to such differing conclusions? How can we avoid being misled?

This is not another book containing analyses of the various evidences for creation and evolution. Rather, we intend it to focus people's attention on why what we believe about creation is important. Why it matters. What does belief in a literal,

seven-day Creation week have to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it really important?

As we pursue those questions, we'll weave into our presentation just enough evidence to illustrate how to think about the Bible and science and what priorities to set. What is the role of the divine, revealed Word, and what is the role of the human search for understanding? After all, it was God who gave us minds, and He's the One who gave us the Bible. We can use both if we keep the right perspectives.

We puzzle over why there is so much evil in this world. Why are we surrounded by murder, lies, theft, disease, pain, and the death of people we love? Why is our world plagued by agony-causing earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, and floods? We can't find answers to our questions about creation and about who God is without understanding evil.

The Christian portion of the scholarly world is rapidly separating into two groups. One group makes evolutionary science their standard and accepts theistic evolution (also called *evolutionary creationism*)—the belief that the world and life on it has existed for millions of years and that evolution was God's means of creating life-forms. The other group considers the Bible to be God's revelation, and they believe its accounts of a literal, seven-day Creation week and a global flood to be true. We maintain that the second position is the right one—in fact, that it's the only one that reflects the glory, infinite wisdom, and Personhood of God.

Some details of how we talk about this issue are more important than a cursory look at them may suggest, because

some people redefine terms to suit their purposes and do so without revealing what they mean by what they say. They may, for instance, say that they believe in creation, or even in a Bible-based version of creation, thus apparently revealing where they stand on the issue. However, many theistic evolutionists think that people can believe in the biblical story of Creation while also believing that the process God used to create this world was the theistic form of evolution, and that creation took long ages of time. So, we know that people really mean they believe in the biblical Creation only if they specify what that includes: a literal, seven-day Creation week that took place a few thousand years ago.

The presentation in this book is the result of several decades of study and regular meetings with groups focused on the issues of faith and science, creation and evolution, and geology. It also reflects four decades of field and laboratory research in geology and paleontology by one of the authors, and nearly four decades of Old Testament study by the other author, with both of us thinking of how to integrate faith and science.

We don't expect that everyone will agree with what we have written. But we invite you to consider carefully the point of view presented here, and, if you think we are wrong, to show us the evidence.

We are indebted to our colleagues for the thought-provoking ideas they bring to us. We are indebted to our students for challenging us to continue to improve the answers we give in response to their questions. And we are indebted to those who disagree with us. They provoke us to dig deeper

into our subject matter.

We received valuable critiques of the original manuscript from John Baldwin, Art Chadwick, David Cowles, Joe Galusha, Tom Goodwin, Clifford Goldstein, and Ed Zinke. Their suggestions have resulted in many improvements. We, the authors, are responsible for the concepts presented here and for any remaining errors.

THE CHALLENGE

Throughout history, the Christian understanding of the Bible has suffered a series of challenges from the sciences. Even now—especially now—human beings are saying their theories call into question the reliability, the trustworthiness of the divine Word of God. Why does this happen? The answer can teach us important lessons about trust, patience, human science, and our relationship to Jesus.

With his theory of an earth that turns on its axis and revolves around the sun, Copernicus disturbed the long-accepted geocentric view of the universe. After Copernicus's death, Galileo ended up under house arrest for advocating Copernicus's novel idea, which didn't square with the beliefs of the church. Later, Darwin shook up the Christian world even more with his claims that species aren't fixed but evolve through the ages. Add to that the claims that Genesis contains two conflicting Creation accounts and that Moses had wrongly believed that the universe was like an upside-down metal bowl

that rested on a flat earth and held the stars up in the sky. And then there was the claim in Joshua 10:13 that God disturbed the movement of the sun just so the Israelites could win a battle. How could people believe stories like these when the heavenly orbits are so clearly consistent and reliable? (See page 86 of this book for a further comment on this story.)

Now, in the twenty-first century, we are faced with more challenges: bold assertions of radiometric dating that is trustworthy and that demonstrates that the earth has existed for many millions of years, of ice cores containing tens of thousands of annual layers, of a fossil record that clearly shows the evolution of life-forms, and of archaeological evidence that reveals that the biblical Exodus didn't happen—at least not the way the Bible describes it.

This long series of conflicts between the Bible and science has shaken the confidence of many in the reliability of Scripture. Can we trust its message about history? And if its claims about history aren't factual, what about its claims about a time when the earth will be made new?

The scholarly Christian world is rapidly coming to a consensus that the story of a literal creation and a worldwide flood a few thousand years ago is only a myth. Instead, many now believe that life has evolved through the millennia. The corollary to this view is that evil didn't result from Adam and Eve's sin; it was just a natural part of evolution. Is this shift of belief inevitable, or have we missed something?

Central to this issue is the relationship between faith and science—particularly, how we handle conflicts between science

and the Bible without either pushing God out of the way or diminishing the positive insights that science has brought to us. In the following pages, we present an answer to these challenges that is faithful to the Bible.

The challenge in perspective: Cosmic conflict

Have you ever noticed how many books, movies, and cartoons are based on the theme of an epic battle between good and evil? The stories told by these media generally feature a good guy or two and their valiant efforts to thwart the evil witch, the cattle rustler, or the cosmic forces that are trying to force evil plans on the universe. Why this fascination with stories of bitter conflict between evil and the heroism of the defenders of all things good? Could it be that these modern tales reflect the original cosmic conflict—the great controversy between Christ and Satan? That story is the essential platform for understanding the story of Creation and its challengers, and that's why it matters whether we believe it.¹

An extensive study of the Bible confirms that this story of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and the accompanying message of salvation through Jesus is its central issue.² Christianity is not based on abstract theory but on a series of events that occurred in history.

God created the universe sinless and without evil, pain, or death. It was a place of beauty and harmony, and the universal acceptance of God's law resulted in universal peace and happiness. But when He created human beings, He made a tough decision. He could have created them as robots that

would never disobey, but then their obedience would never be motivated by love for their Creator. So, rather than making the angels and later the humans to be obedient robots, God instead gave them the gift of free will. And He did so even though He knew the terrible price He would have to pay if we rebelled.

Eventually, of course, Lucifer, the angel who held the highest position in God's government, did rebel, and consequently he became Satan. Then he influenced Adam and Eve to join his rebellion, exposing the earth and human beings to his power and the evil he has brought upon us. But we not only suffer from evil, we commit it as well. Satan successfully tempts us to commit moral evils, including theft and murder—both of which grow out of selfishness.

Why can't we think our way out of this dilemma and reject Satan's schemes?

Because he's much too intelligent and too strong for us—unless we depend on God's continual presence and power and the guidance His Word provides. Satan's cleverness and deceptive ways are legendary, and he is quite willing to use one weapon God will never use—lies. His continual, wily use of lies is one reason for his success.

We can grasp this only if we accept the biblical view that God and Satan aren't impersonal forces, but rather are personal beings—One who loves us and desires our happiness, and one who hates us and seeks to destroy us.

Because our sins are the source of all this trouble, we need a Redeemer. Jesus took upon Himself this role, living and dying

on earth to defeat Satan's plan to grasp control of the universe. The resurrected Jesus provides the ultimate gift: salvation and eternal life, which we will receive in a re-created world where there will no longer be any sin or evil. The great controversy is the story of how sin began and how Christ will end it.³

We will return to this story and examine how it affects the issues we encounter in the relationship between faith and science.

ENDNOTES

1. See J. Eldredge, *Epic: The Story God Is Telling* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).
2. E. G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1950); R. M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, nos. 1, 2 (Spring–Autumn 2000): 102–119.
3. White, *The Great Controversy*.