

# SCHOLAR'S CORNER

**How is Adam and Eve's creation 6,000 years ago related to recent genome research that indicates man's divergence from the chimpanzee 5-8 million years ago?**  
— Charles Boenning, Ascension & Holy Trinity, Wyoming

This question involves the issue of the historicity of Genesis and how to deal with cases where the Bible does not fit with modern science.

Modern genetics as well as modern geology, paleontology and astronomy all show that the earth is much older than 6,000 years old. This causes problems for Jews and Christians because Genesis provides genealogies going all the way back to Adam and Eve that include how old each person was when they begat their first child, enabling one to add up the lifespans in the genealogy and so arrive at a date for Adam and Eve.

According to the most well-known Christian calculation, that was done by the Anglican Archbishop of Armagh (in Ireland) James Ussher (1581-1656), Creation took place in the year 4004 B.C., making the universe 6,011 years old. According to the Jewish calendar, which counts from Creation, the year

5768 began this last September 12 on Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year).

By the way, Muslims do not have the same difficulty posed by modern science regarding the age of the universe as Jews and Christians. This is because the Qur'ān does not give genealogies with lifespans indicated going back to Adam and his wife (whose name the Qur'ān never gives). Muslims therefore are able to accept a great age for the universe, since there are no Qur'ānic verses requiring a young earth.

There are several ways in which Christians (and Jews) have tried to harmonize Genesis with modern science. The most well-known is to say that the Days of Creation in Genesis One refer not to 24-hour days but to very long periods of time, which when added up, could come to the several billion years scientists speak of for the ages of the earth and of the universe. I dealt with this attempt at harmonization in a previous column and expressed my dissatisfaction with this solution.

Another approach says that between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis

1:2, the earth was destroyed and recreated. All the findings of science (like a great age for the universe, the existence of dinosaurs, "cave men") have to do with that first world. All of Genesis from the second verse on has to do with the second, recreated world that started anew with Adam and Eve 6,000 years or so ago. A problem for this theory is that Genesis does not ever say that there was a previous world.

Increasingly popular today among conservative Protestants is the "young earth" view, which says that all scientific figures that date the earth more than 6,000 years old is seriously flawed and mistaken. The dinosaurs and all other extinct species the fossils of which are found in sedimentary rock were killed off by Noah's Flood less than 6,000 years ago. This "young earth" view is propagated by the Creation Museum recently opened near the Cincinnati airport in Northern Kentucky.

What all these approaches to the problem have in common is their unwillingness to give up the belief in the Bible being without any errors of any sort, a supernatural book of Divine origin. I find it more defensible to acknowledge a human origin for the Bible, with the Bible being a book *about* God rather than a book written *by* God, and to "give ground" in cases where the biblical text is incompatible with science or archaeology. I know that many Christians fear such "giving ground" will result in the undermining and discrediting of Christianity, but I think the rejection of science brings Christianity into disrepute and is the occasion of much scorn and laughter.

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