

## Riding the Rapids: *Evolution and Creationism Part Two*

We've spent the last several months in a series called Riding the Rapids: *Navigating the Whitewater of Today's Culture*, and this morning we will be wrapping up both the series and last week's message on evolution and creation.

### Gen 1:20-27

Let me begin by repeating something I said last week. The goal of these messages isn't to somehow disprove evolution and prove that God created the universe. No one can do that, and certainly I can't do that! But, as Richard Dawkins says in his book *The Greatest Show on Earth*, since no one was present at the beginning of the universe or the world, we are like detectives who come upon the scene of a crime and try to deduce from the evidence what happened. The flaw in his analogy is that a good detective, although he or she might have a working theory of what happened, will follow the clues to wherever they might lead without trying to bend the evidence to support their preferred conclusion.

Both creationists and evolutionists have biases - what I think can be accurately called faith - that they then read into the evidence. Evolutionists probably don't like someone accusing them of faith, but they have to have faith to believe what they believe, just as creationists do (I think more so). Last week we looked at exhibits A, B, and C. The existence of the universe, the precision of the universe, and a planet finely tuned for life. This week I want to introduce exhibit D and then briefly consider some common objections to creationism.

#### 4. Exhibit D: *the irreducible complexity of life*

##### a. *Darwin's Black Box*

In 1996 a biochemist named Michael Behe published an award winning book called Darwin's Black Box. A black box is a term to describe a device that does something but whose inner workings are a mystery to the user either because the inner workings can't be seen or because they aren't understood. There are black boxes all around us. Computers are black boxes for most of us. We use them but most of us don't really understand how they work. TVs are black boxes. Microwaves, cell phones, even cars are black boxes to many of us. The problem is that when we don't know how something really works, we are susceptible to coming up with wrong ideas about what's going on inside a black box. For instance, take this genuine FB conversation between a young woman named Olivia and her friend Evan.

Olivia wrote a post on FB saying: *I need a summer job, anyone know anyone who is hiring people to work?*

Evan asks: *What kinda job you lookin for?*

Olivia: *I dunno, something ez like a cd or movie store where [i] just sit round all day n watch movies lol!*

Evan writes back: *You should try Redbox. They are always hiring.*

Olivia: *4 real? I thought that was just a movie machine thing?*

Evan: *Nah, there is a guy inside the box that dispenses movies out to you. I hear it's a really simple job. My buddy works in one, he said there is a TV and a mini fridge inside. Go check it out, just go up to a red box and knock and get an application.*

Olivia: *cool! I go right now!!*

Obviously for Olivia, Red Box is a black box. In Charles Darwin's day it was the cell that was a black box. Scientists could see the cell under a microscope, but it just looked like a glob of Jell-O to them. To Darwin, whose theory of evolution asserted that non-life gave birth to very simple forms of life that then



cell would take more than 300 of these protein molecules. This is the foundational question that Darwinism has not even begun to answer. Darwinism is based on natural selection in which self-replicating organisms reproduce offspring with variations that make them better adapted at surviving than their predecessor. But to reproduce, it takes the existence of information rich DNA. Stephen C Meyers puts it this way:

*You've got to have a self-replicating organism for Darwinian evolution to take place, but you can't have a self-replicating organism until you have the information necessary in DNA, which is what you're trying to explain in the first place.*<sup>4</sup>

He goes on to give this illustration: Darwin's answer to how life began is like the guy who falls into a deep hole and realizes that he won't be able to get out without a ladder. So he climbs out, goes home, grabs a ladder, jumps back into the hole, and climbs out. The answer begs the question. Natural selection, which supposedly explains how life began, doesn't explain DNA, and yet you can't have natural selection without DNA - they need to go home and get a ladder in order to get out of that hole.

Life is enormously complex, and as Michael Behe points out, it is *irreducibly* complex. In other words, the complex systems that go on in living organisms can't be reduced to simpler systems because they don't work unless all the parts work at once. Behe breaks down the incredible complexity of such things as the eye, the clotting of blood, and the bombardier beetle, to show that all around us are fantastically complex systems that cannot be explained in a pathway of development - the individual parts are useless unless all the right parts are combined in all the right ways. They all had to develop (or evolve) at once because there's no way to reduce these systems and still have them do what they are meant to do.

I cut my finger while wrapping gifts. It would have been fatal but my life was saved by a miracle: the miracle of blood clotting. That's not something we think a lot about but it's a miracle of complexity. The miracle isn't the clotting itself - that's just a blob that blocks the flow of blood. The miracle is the system that regulates blood clotting. If blood didn't clot at all, or took too long to clot I'd have bled to death before I could finish wrapping all my gifts. If blood clotted in the wrong place, like the lungs or brain, we'd die. If the clot isn't confined to the cut, our whole blood system would clot up and we'd die. The system of blood clotting is a highly choreographed process of ten steps involving about twenty molecular components. It is very complex and precise, and there's no simplistic pathway to it, it all has to work or none of it works. It is irreducibly complex.

So exhibit D is the irreducible complexity of life.

### **Closing objections**

As we bring the trial to a close (and we've barely touched on all the evidence for a Creator), there are a couple objections that can be raised.

*Objection #1 - aren't there evidences of evolution and natural selection going on all around us?*

The answer to this is yes, if you're talking micro-evolution. There are adaptations and variations that come within species. Just as a horticulturalists and breeders can breed specific types of flowers or dogs, that type of micro-evolution goes on in nature. This doesn't contradict the Bible at all - in fact, the Bible would actually assert this. Consider this: all the nationalities of mankind, with all the unique and diverse characteristics of each nationality, come from one set of parents: Adam and Eve. Science is confirming

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4 Ibid, pg. 286

this with more recent assertions that the idea of different races is a myth - that there is only one race, and we all come from the same biological parents. But distinct differences and variations have evolved over the course of time. The same is true of plants and animals within their species.

What there is no convincing evidence of is one species evolving into another species. I was watching a nature show that included a segment about the Japanese Mudskipper - a fish that can walk on land and has a unique way of breathing air. It loads its gills with water and then gulps air periodically and combine the oxygen with the water so that it breathes the oxygen through water like any other fish.

But is this convincing evidence that one species is evolving into another? Evolutionists believe the Mudskipper is evidence that fish departed from the ocean 365 million years ago and eventually became air-breathing mammals. Creationists look at the same evidence, and believe that the reason the Mudskipper has some unique mammal-like characteristics even though it's a fish is that there is a common Designer who has woven variations of His design into different creatures. The fact that chimpanzees share characteristics with humans, including about 96% common DNA coding, can be interpreted to mean that we share a common ancestry but it can also be interpreted to mean that we share a common Designer. What we see in nature are very crisp and clear and unmoving lines between species and it makes us ask the question: if this evolutionary process was so vast as to evolve all the varieties of living creatures over time, why are the lines, both in living creatures and in fossil evidence, so crisp and defined? Again, it's a matter of faith. Evolutionists look at the evidence and see a slow moving evolution that only looks as if each species is clearly defined and that there is no transitions between species because our snapshot of time is so small in comparison with the billions of years that such change needs to take place. Creationists look at the evidence and see crisp and unmoving categories of species, and see the hand of God who made each living creature *according to its kind*.

*Objection #2 - hasn't science proven that the earth is very, very old?*

There is evidence that seems to suggest that the age of the earth is much older than the 10K years or so that a literal reading of the Bible would indicate. This can certainly give some challenges to the creationist, but let me offer two possible explanations for this challenge.

### **Old earth theory**

One theory is that the account in Genesis does not mean 7 literal 24 hour days. The Hebrew word for day can be used to refer to an indefinite amount of time. And so, some believe that God's creative work took millions of years to complete - which to God who is timeless wouldn't be any big deal - and the Lord framed it as seven days for us to use as a model for our work week cycle. While I am not convinced of this view, I believe that it is a view that sincere believers can hold to and still affirm an orthodox belief in the God of the Bible.

### **Young earth with built in maturity**

Personally I believe that God created everything in seven literal days. If even materialists like Bill Bryson believe that 98% of all the matter that ever was or ever will be was produced in 3 minutes, then it is nothing to believe that the God who can do that in 3 minutes can create all that is in 7 days.

We know from the biblical account that God created the earth with some degree of built in maturity. Adam and Eve looked like a young man and young woman on their first day of existence. Likewise, the vegetation and creatures were created with built in maturity - they looked older than they were.

Some of the stars we see with the naked eye are more than 10k light years away, and with the right equipment we can see stars that are millions of light years away. For the creationist it's not hard at all to believe that the God who created light in the first place, when He created the universe and the earth, created it all with the star light reaching the earth from the very beginning. God created the heavens for our sake and our delight.

But the questions get tougher when we talk about properties of planet earth that seem to indicate an old age such as the measurement of potassium-40 that has a half-life of 1.26 billion years. All things being constant, if you had a certain quantity of potassium-40, in 1.26 billion years half of it would have decayed into argon 40. In this way, based on the amounts of potassium-40 and argon 40 we have, we can date the earth as billions of years old.

No doubt this also presents challenges for the creationist. But it is possible that the God who built maturity into other aspects of the earth might have built in a maturity into the radioactive materials as well. There is evidence that decay rates can be accelerated given the right conditions, and we simply don't know all the conditions that went into the creation of the world, except to say that it is pretty certain it was unlike anything that has happened since. There is no question that there are unanswered questions and things that we don't know - a kind of black box as far as dating goes - and I don't have a problem admitting that there is evidence pointing strongly to an old earth, but the fact is there are unanswered questions and problems for all sides of this argument, including for Christians who affirm an old earth.

The fact is, however this universe and earth came into being, and all the complex, interdependent, and beautiful ecosystem of living beings on earth, it is beyond our comprehension and stretches our faith. The idea that there is a God who created all of this complexity with the spoken word is actually really strange - it's hard to believe and harder to conceive. However the idea that all of this came from absolute nothingness is, in my opinion, even harder to believe. It takes more faith to believe that the great First Cause of everything was nothing. That the intricacy of life was designed by time and random chance.

- Nothing produced everything.
- Non-life produced life
- Randomness produced fine-tuning
- Chaos produced order
- Unconsciousness produced consciousness
- Non-reason produced reason
- Meaninglessness produced meaning

Both take faith. But one more very important piece of evidence to examine: the Bible account fits the human story and the human soul much better. We long for a universe that isn't a cold, impersonal, and ultimately meaningless place, and we live refusing to believe that our lives are just chemical, biological blips on a vast radar, meaning less than nothing in the end. That just doesn't fit our souls. We feel very deeply that we are much, much more and that life is much, much more, and that beauty and meaning are not just illusions to keep us putting one foot in front of the other, but true and real things that are woven into the fabric of our existence.

Richard Dawkins tries to answer this deep inner longing by finding beauty and grandeur in his view of evolution. He asks the question, *how is it that we find ourselves not merely existing but surrounded by such complexity, such elegance, such endless forms most beautiful and wonderful?*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, pg. 426

His answer: it could not have been otherwise. Without all this beauty and warmth and green and sunlight and fine-tuning, we wouldn't be here to observe it. He says it is not by accident but the consequence of an evolutionary, non-random process of evolution, "the only game in town, the greatest show on Earth." But honestly, to my mind it is a deeply unsatisfying answer. Really? The answer to how all this came to be is that it could not be otherwise or we wouldn't be here to see it? Does anyone really believe that is an answer to the impossible improbabilities of the universe, the earth, and life? But to my soul it also rings hollow. There is nothing personal or warm or loving about our existence - our meaning comes from being a cog in the wheel of an everlasting evolution being churned out.

The Bible offers a very different answer. Ps 139 describes a God who lovingly created each of us.

*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

**14** *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Ps. 139:13-17*

God knit each one of us together in our mother's womb - a very complicated process, but the focus of Ps. 139 isn't on the complexity of our existence, it's on the intimate love of our Creator, who lovingly knit our bodies together and breathed our souls, our consciousness into those bodies. We are more than our bodies. Our consciousness is beyond what science can explain or reproduce.

The Bible also fits the human story in that it explains that something is very wrong. Sin entered the world like a cancer, and even as we still see echoes of the beauty and majesty of creation and of the human race, we also see something dark and out of whack. And again, love comes to the rescue. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.

Does that prove the Bible is true and evolutionistic and naturalistic explanations of our existence are wrong? No. But it's another piece of evidence - it fits the human story better and fits the shape of our souls and the longing of our souls better. I remember as a young teenager struggling with a deep sense of emptiness and then giving my heart to the Lord, I grew to love a song that said

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold.  
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;  
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land,  
Yes, I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.*

In other words, as we peered deeper into the cell, we found greater and greater complexity, but as we peer deeper and deeper into the soul, we find a greater and greater simplicity: our longing and need for God, our Creator. We don't have to understand everything - no one does anyway - to have faith in God and His word. It's what we were created for. Let's pray.