

STUDY GUIDE

NOTES

There are two competing explanations for the origin of death and suffering: the Biblical view (based on the doctrine of Creation) and the secular view (based on a belief in ‘millions of years’ and evolution).

1. Biblical view:

- a. God created all things in six days around 6000 years ago and declared His creation ‘very good.’
- b. Originally, vegetation was given for food (Gen 1:29).
 - i. The Bible makes a clear distinction between the status of plants and animals. People and animals are described in Genesis as having, or being, *nephesh* (Hebrew) — see Genesis 1:20,21,24 where *nephesh chayyah* is translated ‘living creatures’, and Genesis 2:7 where Adam became a ‘living soul’ (*nephesh chayyah*). *Nephesh* conveys the basic idea of a ‘breathing creature’. Perhaps *nephesh* refers to life with a certain level of consciousness. Plants do not have such *nephesh*, and so Adam eating a carrot did not involve death in the Biblical sense.
 - ii. Vegetation requires ‘sharp teeth’ for chewing, e.g. pandas eat mainly bamboo with their sharp teeth and claws.
 - iii. It was only after the Flood that God permitted the eating of meat by humans (Genesis 9:3).
- c. Adam disobeyed God’s order to not eat from a certain tree (Genesis 2:16-17) and because of this first sin (defined as rebellion against God), death (and with it disease, suffering, thorns, thistles, bloodshed) entered the world and the entire creation was changed (Romans 8:22). Both Adam and Eve immediately began to die physically and were separated from God spiritually.
- d. God shed the first blood by killing an animal to make clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21; Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22).
- e. God withdrew some of His sustaining power from His creation after Adam sinned. We see glimpses of what His complete sustenance was like:

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- i. Dan 3: 26,27: Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego in the fiery furnace were not burned, nor was there even the smell of fire on their clothes.
- ii. Dt 8:4; 29:5; Neh 9:21: While the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, their clothes and shoes did not wear out, neither did their feet swell.
- f. Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, came to Earth, was crucified and raised from the dead to pay the penalty for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and redeem the world from the curse of sin.
- g. Those who have received the gift of eternal life look forward to the new heavens and Earth in which the curse will be no more (Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21:1,4, 22:3a).

*Therefore, death (of *nephesh* animals and humans) and suffering are not a permanent part of God's creation, but rather are an intrusion as the result of sin and will be done away with in the new heavens and Earth.

2. Secular view: Death has been around for millions of years and is a permanent part of the universe.

*Therefore, death, disease, bloodshed, suffering, violence and thorns existed long before man was on the scene. For the Christian, this means these things were around before Adam sinned. This belief destroys the basis of the Gospel, Christian morality and the Biblical teaching of a new heavens and new Earth. Those who add 'millions of years' to the Bible are, in essence, blaming God for the corruption we see in the world, rather than blaming ourselves (because we, in Adam, sinned (Romans 5:12, ff)).

NOTES

Q U O T E S

Life Nature Library, *Evolution*, Ruth Moore, Time Inc., p. 21.

The oddest inhabitants of the Galapagos coastlines are the marine iguanas, which exist nowhere else in the world. Like miniature dinosaurs, the inky, armored lizards swarm over the rocky shores of the islands. When upset they squirt vapor from their nostrils like storybook dragons. Despite their ferocious appearance the sea iguanas are strict and docile vegetarians, completely harmless and gregarious to an extreme. Though armed with strong claws and sharp teeth, they rarely use them on each other and never attack other animals.

Taronga Zoo, Australia, bear exhibit, July 1999

Although all bears have teeth designed for eating meat, their diet consists mainly of plants.

Bishop John Shelby Spong (Episcopal Bishop of Newark), *A Call for a New Reformation*, from home page for the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, September 4, 1999.

The Bible began with the assumption that God had created a finished and perfect world from which human beings had fallen away in an act of cosmic rebellion. Original sin was the reality in which all life was presumed to live. Darwin postulated instead an unfinished and thus imperfect creation. Human beings did not fall from perfection into sin as the Church had taught for centuries. Thus the basic myth of Christianity that interpreted Jesus as a divine emissary who came to rescue the victims of the fall from the results of their original sin became inoperative.

The Biblical story of the perfect and finished creation from which human beings fell into sin is pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.

Ian Barbour (scientist, recipient of the 1999 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion), *Searching for Answers*, *Dayton Daily News*, Religion section, March 13, 1999.

...Now we know that...evolution is God's way of creating...You simply can't any longer say as traditional Christians that death was God's punishment for sin. Death was around long before human beings. Death is a necessary aspect of an evolutionary world...One generation has to die for new generations to come into being. In a way, it is more satisfying...than to see it as a sort of arbitrary punishment that God imposed on our primeval paradise. We can take the Bible seriously without taking it literally.

Dr Francisco J. Ayala (former Dominican priest, author of 12 books and 650 articles on genetics, and a professor of biological sciences and philosophy, who is known in the science world as the Renaissance man of evolutionary biology), *New York Times*, April 27, 1999.

I say that evolution, in my view, is not only NOT anti-Christian, but the idea of special design, which many fundamentalists adhere to, might be – because it teaches the view of God that is blasphemous. The Special-Design-God is a God who messes up. Think about all the backaches, infected wisdom teeth and painful childbirth that exist because we humans evolved incompletely! 'Do you think God is absent-minded?' I ask them.

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**Irven DeVore (Harvard University anthropologist),
Astronomy might be refashioning images of God,
Times-News Weekender, p. 9A, May 1, 1999.**

I personally cannot discern a shred of evidence for a benign, cosmic presence. I look at evolution and I see indifference and capriciousness. What kind of God works with a 99.9 percent extinction rate?

Jacques Monod, *The Secret of Life*, Australian Broadcasting Commission Science Unit interview, aired June 10, 1976.

Natural selection is the blindest, most cruel way of evolving new species...I am surprised that a Christian would defend the idea that this is the process which God more or less set up in order to have evolution.

G. Richard Bozarth, *The Meaning of Evolution*, *American Atheist*, p. 30, September 20, 1979.

Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. Take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer that died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing.

Vice President Al Gore, *Larry King Live*, aired May 6, 1999, 9:00p.m. ET.

You can hardly take your eyes away from it. I think that violence has that capacity because of our evolutionary heritage, because of the laws of nature—tooth and fang. And we have with our power of conscience, with our beliefs in God, if we have those, as most of us Americans do, we have the ability to—to overcome those impulses with higher ones. We have the ability to overcome evil with good. But I think that heritage is always present with us. It was for most of humankind's existence part of our way of surviving. And so I think it has a primitive appeal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you were witnessing to someone who wondered how to reconcile all the violence present in our society with a loving, caring God, how would you respond?
2. If you were a pastor being interviewed by the secular media, describe one way you might begin to answer the question, 'Pastor, how do you explain the increasing violence in schools that we are experiencing today?'
3. Describe, in your own words, how accepting millions of years of Earth history affects the Biblical teaching of the Gospel.
4. What is the significance of the clothing God made for Adam and Eve?
5. How is the Biblical teaching of the new heavens and Earth affected by a belief in 'millions of years' of Earth history? (Hint: What will the 'restoration' be like?)
6. Explain why someone cannot call himself a 'Christian nudist' and be consistent with Scripture.

RESOURCES

*The (Revised and Expanded)
Answers Book*
edited by Dr Don Batten

The Lie: Evolution
by Ken Ham