



Issues, Etc.TM

Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Creation, Part 1: The New Testament and Jesus on Creation"

Guest:

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Conference Speaker at "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation"

February 14, 2013

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WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I'm Todd Wilken. If you want to discuss creation in the Bible, there's an obvious place to begin, and that would be the beginning: Genesis, where the first order of business is God creating the world in six days. And that's, in plain and simple language, how God describes, revealed through Moses there in that first book of the Bible, how He went about it. He doesn't actually tell us *how* he did it, except that He did it by His

Word. He doesn't give us the mechanics of the issue, He just tells us that there was an evening and a morning, six times in a row, and by the time He was all done and ready to rest, everything that is was. And He'd made it – out of nothing. But if you're going to talk about Biblical creation, and you're going to do it from a Christian perspective, not just kind of a general apologetic perspective, don't you want to consult the highest authority on the subject? Now, of

course Genesis gives us the testimony of the highest authority. But, you know, the highest authority shows up later, born of the Virgin Mary. He was actually there. He's the only one of us who was actually there for the event: Jesus. So what does He think about creation? Is it true that Jesus is silent on the issue?

Joining us to begin a 7-part series on creation – today we're going to be talking about Jesus and the New Testament – Dr. Joel Heck. He's Professor of Theology at Concordia University Texas, and he'll be one of the speakers at a conference titled, "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation," July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin. Dr. Heck, welcome back to *Issues, Etc.*

HECK: Thank you for the welcome. It's good to be with you once again.

WILKEN: We often hear from critics of the Biblical creation account that Jesus is silent on the issue of creation, or that the New Testament is silent on the issue of creation. Is that true?

HECK: That's not at all true. I have recently completed a careful reading of the New Testament, looking for references to creation. By my count, there are 18 references in the Gospels to creation, and most of them are in the mouth of Jesus, which shouldn't surprise us, because just as you said a few moments ago, He was there at creation. In fact, the letter to the Colossians talks about that by Him, all things were created. So He's the Creator, and it shouldn't really surprise us that He had something to say about creation when we get down to the New Testament.

WILKEN: So where do we begin when we talk about Jesus, with respect to the subject of creation? Where in the New Testament would you go?

HECK: Well, there is a little bit in all four Gospels, but I probably should take you to the most important passages, which are two parallel passages in Matthew and Mark. And perhaps the passage in Mark is just the one we ought to look at, maybe a little bit more explicit. But in the 10th chapter of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, who are testing Him on the subject of divorce' whether divorce is legitimate, and Jesus says, "Well, Moses permitted that, but it was because your hearts were hard." And in the context of that conversation, Mark 10:6, Jesus says, "At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female." So of course there in verse 6, He's quoting from the first chapter of Genesis, quoting Genesis 1:26-27. And then He goes on to say, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, so they are no longer two but one." And in that very next verse, then, He's quoting from the second chapter of Genesis, 2:24 in Genesis. So Jesus has two references to creation – the creation account – in this conversation, which has its parallel in the 19th chapter of Matthew. You can read those verses, verses 4-6 in Matthew 19, very, very comparable to what we have in Mark 10:6-8.

WILKEN: So what, exactly, is Jesus saying – to talk about the account itself, because it quotes it, or a part of it. What is He saying about the Biblical account of creation there in that reference?

HECK: Yes, we need to stop and talk about that just a little bit, because I've read those words many times and until, oh, sometime in the last year, until I read someone who had taken a close look at that and thought about the context of creation, I didn't quite catch the significance of the words of Jesus. And I will certainly admit that we are not given a very precise timetable, but we are given some clues as to whether the earth and the human race are relatively young or

relatively old – that is, we’re given a choice, I think, from the words of Jesus, between thousands of years and billions of years for the age of the earth. So if you’ll notice the precise words, Jesus says, “At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.” So the creation of Adam and Eve happened during that first week, when He talks about the beginning of creation, He’s talking about the creation week. He’s not talking about the very first moments of the very first day of the six days, but He’s talking about the creation week. And that’s what a fairly traditional reading of Genesis 1-2 concludes, that the earth is young in the realm of thousands of years old, and so Adam and Eve show up on day 6 at the beginning of creation during that very first week. If, however, one is a Darwinist, and believes with most of the Darwinian community that the universe is about 14.6 billion years old, and the earth may be 4.6 billion years old, and in that scenario, you think of the first human beings showing up – oh, it varies. Some University California-Berkeley scientists think 200,000 years ago is when the first humans showed up. There are others who think that it happened a couple million years ago. But in either case, there is a huge difference between 200,000 years and, say, 2 million. But in comparison to 14.6 billion, which would be the start of the universe, Adam and Eve, or the first humans in that scenario show up way at the end. So if they’re right, then Jesus is wrong. On the other hand, if Jesus is right, they’re wrong. And I think the same thing is true – I shouldn’t say “I think” because the same thing is really true of the position known as “Old Earth Creationism,” which denies Darwinian evolution but adopts the timetable that the Darwinians have adopted. And they say that the universe is 14.6 billion years old, and the earth about 10 billion years younger than that. In that scenario, we’d also have the first human beings showing up on earth towards the end of the 14.6 billion years, rather than at the

beginning. So Jesus is, I think, throwing it in his hat very much with a young earth.

WILKEN: He is affirming the timetable, so to speak, that is presented in a plain and simple way in the Genesis account.

HECK: Yes, I think so. It’s sufficiently important that both Matthew and Mark use it, and there are a number of other passages in the Gospels. A couple of them – one of them is in the genealogical material in Luke 3, but most of the rest of the passages suggest that there have been human beings around since the beginning, and that Satan has been around since the beginning. So for instance, in John 8:44, Jesus describes the devil as a murderer from the beginning. Now, that sort of depends on when you think the devil was around, but it suggests to me pretty plainly that the devil has been around since the beginning of time, or near the beginning of time, and that the fall into sin in Genesis 3 happened relatively soon after the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2. And again, we’re not told in Genesis how soon after the creation Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, but we are told that – well, we are seeing chapter 3 follow immediately on chapter 2, and so it seems to be about the same time.

WILKEN: All right, we’ll take a break. When we come back, we’ll continue our conversation with Dr. Joel Heck on Jesus and the New Testament on creation.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I’m Todd Wilken. It’s Thursday afternoon, the 14th of February. Dr. Joel Heck is our guest. We’re beginning a 7-part series with him on creation; today, Jesus and the New Testament.

Dr. Heck, just give us some of the data here that we’ve got – how many books of the New Testament, how many authors of the

New Testament *actually* make reference to the Biblical creation?

HECK: Yes, the New Testament's very interested in Genesis and especially creation. Every New Testament author and every New Testament book except seven books, all of which are epistles, mentions creation in one way or another. The first 19 chapters – events from the first 19 chapters of Genesis are mentioned in the New Testament, and every chapter of Genesis except for 7 is mentioned in the New Testament. So we have not only every author, but also Jesus Himself, assuming He didn't write any of the 27 books of the New Testament, mentions creation. And they mention them in some very broad categories. We have 28 references to creation in John, 5 books including the 3 epistles, the Gospel, and Revelation; 45 references in Paul's 13 epistles, a total of 18 passages in the four Gospels that mention creation; and the book of Revelation has 21 references, so it's quite interested in creation. And the book of Hebrews – those two books, Revelation and Hebrews, being very focused on the Old Testament, have a lot of references. Hebrews has 11, with the 21 in Revelation.

WILKEN: Now, if we take this all this together, you're able to kind of categorize these things, these references into four categories, beginning with what you call echoes or allusions to creation.

HECK: Yes, I've found 53 echoes of creation, or allusions to creation. So even something as simple as the use of the word "creature," which means something that has been created, would be an echo of creation. Or "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation," well, "new creation," which is conversion, makes a whole lot more sense when we see the word "creation" there as an echo of the original creation. And a mention in Romans 1:20, for instance, to God as creator is just a reference in

passing, it's just the word, but that's an echo or an allusion to creation. So that's the first category – 53 passages in that category.

Then there are ten references to the beginning of time, with the assumption that after time begins, or when time begins, that's when the created world appears. I have 37 references to events during the creation week. So when Paul's writing to the Corinthians, he talks about the God who made light to shine: "May that message shine in our hearts." So we're looking there at 2 Corinthians 4:6.

And then the last category is what I would call "significant events during creation," during the creation week, that are dated to a recent period of history. And I have 11 passages that fit into that category, for a total of 111 places in the New Testament where creation is mentioned in one way, shape, or form. That's quite a lot.

WILKEN: So would an example of that third category that you mentioned there, that references to events during creation week, would an example be like Paul talking about how Adam was formed first, then Eve? Is that an example of that?

HECK: That would be a reference to it. There are some general references, so that for instance when, in Acts 4:24, Luke writes, "God made the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything in them," that would be a general reference to creation in its entirety. There are references to the whole concept of creation out of nothing in Romans 4 and Hebrews 11. The one I mentioned, a reference to the creation of light during the first day, the creation of Adam and Eve, the creation of Adam and Eve in the image of God – those two come together, but the image of God is something that Paul more explicitly draws out separate from creation per se. And then the whole idea of marriage in 1 Corinthians and in Ephesians: Paul talks about the two becoming one flesh, for instance, in 1

Corinthians 6:16. And then we have a couple of references in the 4th chapter of Hebrews to the 7th day, the day of rest, when God finished His work of creating and ceased to create on that 7th day. So we have quite a few events from the creation week that are mentioned in the New Testament, which seems to have a lot of interest in the 1st day and the 6th day – especially the 6th day – and a little bit of interest in the 7th day, and it says nothing that I can see about days 2-5.

WILKEN: Can you give us some examples of, as you call them, significant events related to creation that are dated to a recent period in history?

HECK: Okay. Well, in addition to the two that I mentioned earlier plus the one from John 8, about Satan being a murderer from the beginning, Romans 1:20 talks about “since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse.” Those words imply that people have been around since the creation of the world as we saw in Matthew 19 and Luke 10. Because who would be clearly seeing or understanding the power of God, the divine nature of God from creation, if there was nobody around for the first 14.5 billion years of the created universe? So there’s the suggestion there that people have been around since that first week. And likewise in Hebrews 9:26 the writer of the Hebrews talks about Christ, who would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world, so again suggesting continuous existence of the human race since that day.

WILKEN: So it sounds like what you’re saying is not only are there multiple – really, an overwhelming number of explicit references to the Biblical creation in the New Testament; it is also assumed in the general theology that’s presented there in the New Testament.

HECK: Yes. And, in fact, I find no indication anywhere in the New Testament that any of the passages of Genesis are to be understood in a mythological or legendary sense, as if they’re not really talking about historical people. So Paul’s argument to the Romans, for instance, which isn’t part of this study, but when he says, “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,” he’s drawing a correlation between the first man and the second man and saying, “The first man led us into sin, the second Man leads us out of sin by His death and resurrection.” And if, in fact, the second man was a historical individual, and I know there are some that challenge the existence of Jesus, even, but if He’s a historical individual, then that first one would be also. Otherwise it doesn’t make much sense to compare the two individuals. So consistently throughout the New Testament, just not even a hint of mythological or legendary overtones for those early chapters of Genesis.

WILKEN: By that same token, is there a hint anywhere in the New Testament of an evolutionary view of creation?

HECK: Absolutely not. You can look at the very same passages and say, “Is there some suggestion that we have evolved from single-cell creatures or less well-developed creatures or from apes or from some other creature that was smaller and less complex than we are today? You’d find no references whatsoever anywhere in the New Testament to anything that even hints at evolutionary development.

WILKEN: Well, I know, Dr. Heck, what those listening to us who disagree are going to say. Probably the first card they’re going to play is, “Look, well, I’m not surprised that Jesus believed in creation. I’m not surprised that any of the other people in the New Testament era, including the apostles, believed in a six-day creation. They didn’t know better. They were simple people;

simple, non-scientific minds, who are simply accepting the claims of the Old Testament in a literal way. They just didn't know any better." What's your best response to that?

HECK: Well, I'd say first of all, that's very dangerous for anybody that understands Jesus to be both God and man. The two natures of Christ means not only that God was there, the Son of God was there at creation, but that He would be guilty of deception if we said that He didn't really know any better. So I don't think you can make that claim. Christ was present. He understood it, and He also did not accommodate Himself to the beliefs of His day as though they were too simple-minded. The people of the 1st century were just as intelligent in understanding life and the way things worked in the world of nature as we are today, and to suggest that Jesus accommodated Himself because the people that day probably wouldn't have understood the great distances of space or the vast amounts of time, I think, is to paint a picture of a Jesus that is significantly less than the one we that have in the New Testament.

WILKEN: Before we let you go, on July 8-10, Concordia University Wisconsin is going to host a creation conference called "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation." With about 30 speakers, what can you tell us about this creation conference?

HECK: Yes, one of the major areas in which evolutionists think that creationists do not have a case to make is the area of astronomy, the vast distances of outer space. So we want to tackle that question

head-on. We've got two keynote speakers coming in, one of whom is particularly an astronomer. He's going to talk about the indicators from the world of astronomy that the age of the earth is a young age. He's going to give us a Biblical perspective on astronomy. And the other keynote speaker is going to talk about the moon and the things we can learn from the moon about the age of the earth, and also he's going to look at the indications of design in the universe. So our focus is primarily astronomy, but not exclusively so. We will have some breakout sessions on other topics as well.

WILKEN: Folks, you can find out more about "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation," July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin at issuesetc.org. Click "Listen on Demand."

Dr. Joel Heck is Professor of Theology, Concordia University Texas. He'll be one of the speakers at the conference, "The Heavens Declare," July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin.

And next time we'll be talking with Dr. Heck about dating mechanisms for the age of the earth – that is, carbon dating testing and other radiometric dating systems. Next time with Dr. Joel Heck.

Dr. Heck, thanks for being our guest.

HECK: It's my pleasure.

