



Issues, Etc.TM

Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Creation, Part 5: Does Genesis Fit an Old Earth Model?"

Guest:

Dr. Joel Heck

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Author: *In the Beginning, God*

Conference Speaker at "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation," July 8-10, 2013, Concordia University Wisconsin

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WILKEN: I don't think that there are many subjects that we deal with here on *Issues, Etc.* wherein we get feedback from regular listeners and they beg to differ. Not many that probably get more response begging to differ. Regular listeners who love the show, love what we have to say, but often it'll be "Stick to theology." That's what they say, "Stick to theology. Science has proven that the earth is ancient in the extreme. We're

just going to have to accept that fact, and we're going to have to find a way of fitting Genesis into what science has already proven about the extreme age of the earth." Emails, phone calls, and the call is to stick to theology. The problem is, if I stick to theology, what do I gotta do? I've got read Genesis first and say, "What does it say about the age of the earth?" And it says, whether I like it or not, relatively young

earth. So what motivates both Christians and non-Christians to cling tenaciously to an old earth theory?

It's part 4 of our 7-part series on creation. Dr. Joel Heck is our guest. He's Professor of Theology at Concordia University Texas. He's author of the book *In the Beginning, God* and he's going to be one of the speakers at a conference July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin, titled "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation."

Dr. Heck, welcome back.

HECK: It's a pleasure to be back with you once again.

WILKEN: Generally speaking, is there any reason for anyone to hold a lower view of Scripture than they do of science, or at least what purports to be science?

HECK: Well, yes, there are all kinds of reasons. And I don't want to assume that I can read anybody's mind, but some of the things that I read, some of the books I read, both from the creationist side and from an evolutionary perspective, I think I see some reasons why people want to hold a lower view of Scripture. Or they want to hold a higher view of science than they do Scripture, and one of the reasons can be to justify a particular behavior – that science allows me to act in a particular way. Or to justify a position that they hold, that they think science has proven to be absolutely true and cannot be questioned, or on the flip side of that coin, perhaps just to more easily reject a Biblical position that they're not sure that they want to hold to. And so what the Scripture teaches on that subject they can more easily dispense with if science or the allegedly "assured" results of science say something to the contrary and defends a position that they already hold.

WILKEN: You talk about a fact value split. What is that?

HECK: Ah, yes. That's an idea that David Hume and Immanuel Kant, two philosophers from the 18th century, helped to develop. And that was the idea that our world consists of two areas of knowledge. One is the objective knowledge of empirical facts, things that we see and touch and personally experience with our five senses. And that's objective. But morality, aesthetics, and religion are merely values, or they are human preferences, or they are personal likes. And if you set up those two sets of values, which Martin Luther King Jr. did and Albert Einstein did – two pretty impressive individuals – then you can say, "Well, science, like Martin Luther King Jr. said, he said, 'Science deals mainly with fact; religion deals mainly with values.'" And therefore if we really want to know the truth about a particular fact, some empirical thing, then we go to science. That's the realm of science: empiricism. But if we want to know about beliefs, then we turn to religion. Albert Einstein also said that science yields facts while religion expresses values but cannot speak of facts. And I guess I would disagree with that, because I think the Scriptures talk about facts from beginning to end. Sometimes they require some interpretation if we're reading apocalyptic literature, for instance, or sometimes if we're reading poetic literature. But I would disagree with Einstein. I know that's hazardous to do because he was a brilliant man, but I would disagree with Einstein and say that the Scriptures themselves also speak of facts – many facts, thousands of facts from the beginning of Scripture to the end.

WILKEN: Okay, so let's talk about some of the motivations that people have for clinging to an old earth model. And the first one that you mentioned is kind of the extreme end, and that is to keep God and the Bible completely out of the discussion altogether. Talk about that.

HECK: Yes. Journalist Irving Crystal once said evolution has an unwarranted anti-religious edge to it. Richard Dawkins says

that two schools of thought – of evolutionary thought – despise so-called scientific creationists equally. H.J. Lipson writes that, “Creation is anathema to physicists as it is to me.” And even an historian by the name of Stewart Easton said, “In this age, on principle, we are inclined to prefer even the most far-fetched of material explanations to the possibility of any kind of divine guidance or intervention or the fulfillment of any divine purpose.” He says, “Chance and probability appear to us so much more scientific and therefore more credible than a superhuman power and wisdom which could direct the course of evolution.” I don’t think that there is a majority of scientists or evolutionists that adopt that position to keep God and the Bible out of the picture. Perhaps 5%, perhaps 10% of them do. But there are some that are very blunt in talking about their position and adopting, along with evolution, an atheistic perspective. Thomas Nagel, New York University Philosophy professor said, “I want atheism to be true and I’m made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and naturally hope that I am right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God. I don’t want there to be a God. I don’t want the universe to be like that.” That’s pretty frank an admission on the part of Thomas Nagel.

WILKEN: It’s also kind of shockingly honest, isn’t it? I mean, at least for an atheist. Most atheists simply assume what they have yet to prove and say there is no God. At least it sounds like he’s saying, “The best I can do is hope there isn’t.”

HECK: Yes, occasionally people do take the smoke screen off and say what they really want to be true. Another one, a Nobel Prize winner by the name of George Wald: “I do not want to believe in God, therefore I do not choose to believe in that which I know is not scientifically impossible: spontaneous generation arising to evolution.” But there are others also that go

a little bit further, and I would be really careful about ascribing this one to very many people. But it is stated by Julian Huxley, for instance, he said, “I suppose that the reason that we leapt at the *Origin of Species* is the idea that God interfered with our sexual mores.” And Aldous Huxley said something very, very similar. He said, “I have motives for not wanting the world to have meaning. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with the problem of pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.” And then he goes on to say, “We objected to the morality, the system of morality that comes from the Bible, because it interfered with our sexual freedom.” So he wanted to be his own god, he wanted to be able to do what he wanted to do, and that’s one of the reasons why he adopted the position that he did. Perhaps the person that’s most well-known to some in our listening audience is the position of Will Provine, a Cornell University professor who was interviewed and featured in Ben Stein’s movie, *Expelled*. He said, “There are no gods and no designing forces that are rationally detectable. There are no inherent moral or ethical laws.” So it does appear that a minority, perhaps a very small minority, of evolutionists who are also atheists do so for moral reasons. And I would think that it’s guilt that’s the motivator. Whether they realize it or not, they are concerned about the fact that they may be accountable to the God who made them, and one way to at least release myself from the guilt that I’m feeling is to adopt a position that says there is no such thing as a God, there is no Biblical revelation, there are no standards of behavior to which I am expected to live up.

WILKEN: With few minutes here, another motivation for holding to an old earth model, you say, is because often those who hold to this model are simply kind of trusting –

taking other people's word for it, so to speak.

HECK: Yes. I think that's a whole lot more common. There are very few people that have really analyzed and studied the creation-evolution debate at any length whatsoever. They haven't looked at the data firsthand. I'm guessing that close to half of the people that adopt the old age of the earth are trusting people that they consider to be experts in the field. "We have to trust people in various fields. I can't know everything there is to know about my automobile, so I take it to a mechanic. When I purchase a computer, I depend upon a technology specialist. When I'm looking at investing in the stock market or mutual funds or whatever, I need a financial analyst or a person with expertise in that field. If I get sick, I go to a doctor. I don't do my own doctoring, at least not very often. So we have to rely on other people." In fact, C.S. Lewis once wrote about this. He said, and I quote, and this is from his book, *Mere Christianity*, he said, "Ninety-nine percent of the things you believe are believed on authority. I believe there is such a place of New York. I have not seen it myself. I could not prove by abstract reasoning that there must be such a place. I believe it because reliable people have told me the ordinary man believes in the solar system, atoms, evolution, and the circulation of the blood on authority, because the scientists say so." And I think Lewis is right. If any of us that's listening stops and thinks about it, there are many fields in which we trust others for what we have learned about their particular field.

WILKEN: Dr. Joel Heck is our guest. It's part 4 of our 7-part series on creation. Today: motivations behind holding to an old earth theory.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I'm Todd Wilken.

On this Wednesday afternoon, the 20th of March, we're talking with Dr. Joel Heck. Part 4 of our 7-part series on creation. Today, we're talking about some of the motivations behind holding to an old earth theory.

Dr. Heck, the next one is related to the one we discussed before the break, that being simply trusting authority without examining it yourself. And you're quite right; this is part of everyday life that we do this. It's a necessity. Although on this matter, very often we might be trusting authorities that are simply giving us their word and not much more. But the next one is: people seem to assume that science has definitively proven the great age of the earth, and therefore if you're a Christian, you want to take Genesis seriously in any sense whatsoever. You've got to fit Genesis into an old earth model.

HECK: Yes. This is very much paired with the one that we started with. If your view of Scripture is lower than that of science and whatever science has to say on the subject, that's what you trust. And a lot of people have heard scientists talk about the assured results of science, whether it's science in general and comparison to Scripture, or it's one of the scientific disciplines like geology or paleontology or biology or astronomy. There are people in all those disciplines that will talk about how we have to rely on the scientists in this particular area. So for instance, one of my professors in graduate school was an individual fairly well known in evangelical circles, a man by the name of Gleason Archer. He taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School when I was doing a Master's degree there, post-seminary. He's a conservative, staunch on the Scriptures, but he admitted that a creation in six 24-hour days, and I quote, "Seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet earth was created several billion years ago." So he would not believe that the earth was young. He would be what we might call an "old earth creationist." Still would hold to

special creation by God, but he would say that we can't really take the opening chapter of Genesis in any kind of a literal sense. And there are a lot of others that hold to the same position. For instance, James Montgomery Boyce, who was widely known a couple of decades ago for his position and support of the inerrancy of Scripture, said that we have to admit that though the creationist position that the earth is young looks really strong from a Biblical perspective, yet science needs to carry the day in this subject and we need to defer to their position. So I could give you a lot of other examples of quotations from people who have held to that position. Bruce Waltke is fairly well known from Orlando, Florida Reformed Theological Seminary. He says, "The days of creation may also pose difficulties for a strict historical account. Contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the possibility of creation in one week, and we cannot summarily discount the evidence of the earth sciences." So you see, he's not holding science and Scripture on a par. There are some in the field of science that say God spoke to us through two books: the book of Scripture and the book of nature, and we need to segment them and let science have the authority when it speaks in the area of science, and let Scripture have the authority when it speaks in the area of Biblical revelation. The problem is, if you divorce science from Scripture, you divorce history from Scripture, you divorce anthropology from Scripture, you divorce sociology from Scripture, pretty soon if you take all of these areas of secular academic study out of the Scriptures, you've got almost nothing left – especially in the field of history, because the Scriptures are powerfully rooted in history. And you can't really make those distinctions. And I don't think that the Scriptures themselves make those kinds of distinctions either.

WILKEN: Now, just to add a footnote there to that particular reason for holding to an old

earth model. Strictly speaking, while certain things are accepted as so reliably observable in science that they're practically proven, shouldn't we note that the very discipline of science itself, the way it's carried out, would say nothing is absolutely proven. It is very reliably observed, but not necessarily proven because we cannot observe everything everywhere all the time.

HECK: Yes, absolutely. In fact, I've talked to some scientists, those who teach in the sciences, who talk about how science is changing its theories almost daily – regularly, consistently, year after year. We all hear theories that are not dogmatic, and almost in the same breath and sometimes from the same people. I've actually heard the very same person who talks about positions strongly held in science changing from year to year also say, "Well, one thing that we know absolutely for certain is biological evolution. That is a fact. That is established as well as the rotation of the earth around the sun, or the rotation of the earth on its axis. Those are established facts that we can be 100% confident of." And I don't think that those two positions are consistent with one another.

WILKEN: Finally, the objection that I want to deal with last, or at least the reason for motivation of holding to an old earth model that I wanted to deal with last: related to the very first one, you say it's because those who hold to that model simply don't want to give any credence to any other position. Talk about that briefly, with a few minutes.

HECK: Uh, yes. It seems to me that there is a good deal more dogmatism among evolutionary scientists there than there is among Christians, that don't even want to allow Christians or creationists to have their perspective. Eugenie Scott was once interviewed; she's the head of the National Center for Science Education, devoted to supporting the evolutionary perspective and it being taught in our public schools. And she commented when asked that there are

no credible creationist positions that are published in any peer reviewed journals, like the *Journal Nature* or the *Journal Science*, or *Scientific American* or *National Geographic*. And she's right, but the reason why she's right is because the gatekeepers of those periodicals have shut out any intelligent design perspective or any creationist perspective. And if you wrote an article on that topic, even if it was very powerfully rooted in science, the editors would reject that publication as a result of the perspective. So there's very much a reason why creationists aren't allowed to publish in some of those peer review journals, and why they've had to start their own peer review journals. And so now they are published in peer review journals, but not the ones that have evolutionary mindsets as the gatekeepers.

So there's a huge amount of dogmatism, sometimes not even wanting to have a conversation. There are a lot fewer debates that are happening in the public square these days. Some of us may remember the 60s and 70s and 80s, when Henry Morris and Dwayne Gish would have debates on university campuses about creation-evolution. And occasionally those happen even to this day, but most of those debates were won by the creationists, and I think the evolutionists started to realize that if they had to lock horns on an intellectual basis with the creationists, there were a lot of questions that they had no answers to. And so perhaps the best way for them to deal with that is just to not have those conversations anymore. And I think that's what's happening. And that's why people are losing their jobs or not being hired for science positions because the positions they hold on the origins of the earth do not coincide with the standard line: the evolutionary perspective that's held in the secular academy all across our country and around the world.

WILKEN: Before we let you go, Dr. Heck, what can you tell us about "The Heavens

Declare" conference that's coming up July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin? About 30 seconds here.

HECK: This summer our conference is on astronomy. That's actually one of the areas where evolutionists think they have the strongest case against a young earth. So there are – the universe is some 150 billion lightyears across, and if we hold that the earth and the universe are a few thousand years old, that seems to run counter to the size of the universe. So we've invited a couple of astronomers to come and give some keynote talks and address this issue head-on, because I assure you and your listeners that the Big Bang Theory and the evolutionary idea on the age of the earth has its major problems too, and the creationists' perspective is a good deal more solid than most people think.

WILKEN: Folks, you can find out more about The Heavens Declare Conference at our website, issuesetc.org. Click "Listen on Demand."

Next time, we're going to be talking with Dr. Heck about literalism and the creation account.

Dr. Joel Heck is Professor of Theology at Concordia University Texas. He is author of the book *In the Beginning, God* and he'll be one of the speakers at that conference, July 8-10 at Concordia University Wisconsin: "The Heavens Declare: What Astronomy Can Tell Us About Biblical Creation."

Dr. Heck, thank you.

HECK: It's been a pleasure.

WILKEN: For my money, there's only one person who can claim to have observed the origins of all of this. No scientist, no human scientist can claim to have observed it. They can claim to have observed the effects of it, or claim to have observed the lingering effects of what they believe to be the origins

of all things. But there's only one, unless you discount His existence – which you're free to do, of course, to say He doesn't exist. There's only one who can, and claims to have, observed the origins of the universe – not only to have observed it, but to actually have caused it. We say "created" it. And that is God. Now, He has never left us an evolutionary textbook. Not a single word in Holy Scripture, God's revelation of Himself, gives any credence to an old earth or an old universe, or to evolution in

general. Not a single word. He did leave us an account that is rather remarkable: a six-day creation. And for my money, I think I'll take His word for it, because He was there. He observed it. He made it.

I'm Todd Wilken. I'll talk with you tomorrow. Thanks for listening to *Issues, Etc.*

