
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation Ex Nihilo, TJ, and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to Wayne at wayne@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources.

<http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings. This newsletter includes an article comments on the teaching of Dr. Hugh Ross and his ministry, Reasons to Believe (RTB). Many Christians have heard him on Christian radio or television or from some other outlet. He has published several books and is promoted by a number of well known Christian leaders. Yet, there are some significant problems with the material from RTB. Christians should be aware of these issues. Many Christians are surprised to learn of some of Ross' teachings. I hope you will read this article and share it with others. I take a stand on six literal days in Genesis chapter 1, a world wide Flood, and a young Earth and Universe. I think the authority of Scripture leads us to this point of view. This is not Hugh Ross' point of view at all.

Please visit creationanswers.net if you have not recently as it was recently redesigned. There is a new home page with a rotating picture box, new navigation buttons, and a new what's new area. Some areas are reorganized, which will be better for providing new content on certain subjects. I have designed the page myself with cascading style sheets. This will make maintenance of the page much easier. Depending on your browser settings you may have to set your browser to allow scripting. If anyone has difficulties viewing the page, please let me know.

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The Teachings of Hugh Ross

Dr. Hugh Ross leads a well-known apologetics ministry called Reasons to Believe (web site <http://reasons.org>). Dr. Ross has a Ph.D. in Astronomy from the University of Toronto. Ross has written several books which are often found in bookstores, including *Fingerprint of God*, *Creation and Time*, *A Matter of Days*, and *The Genesis Question*. Many Christians have had some exposure to Hugh Ross via Christian television or radio or from reading his books. Hugh Ross' ministry has also had some promotional support from Christian organizations such as Campus Crusade and The Navigators. Even Focus on the Family and Dr. James Dobson have supported Hugh Ross and Reasons to Believe (RTB). Indeed some well known Bible Scholars have supported Ross at least on some points. I feel Christians should be much more aware of some of the significant problems with Dr. Ross' teachings. First of all, let's consider just what Ross' perspective is on the origins issue.

Ross' Point of View

Many Christians have heard or read statements from the RTB ministry that describe recent scientific findings that supposedly confirm the Bible in some way. I would agree with Hugh Ross on some issues related to intelligent design insofar as his arguments do not depend on evolutionary mechanisms. Many Christians may be impressed with some of the information from RTB, but may not be aware of the serious theological issues with some of their teachings. There are scientific questions where I would disagree with Ross on, but I would consider the theological and Biblical issues more important.

Hugh Ross accepts Big Bang theory and emphasizes it frequently. He tries to argue that God has designed the universe through use of the Big Bang process. He even claims that the Bible refers to the Big Bang when it refers to an absolute beginning

and describes God stretching out space. He reads his own assumptions into the text of Scripture (eisegesis). Dr. Ross seems to accept most accepted theories from astronomers regarding the formation of our solar system and the formation of stars and extrasolar planets. He emphasizes how our solar system and planet Earth are specially designed for life. I would agree with him to a point regarding design in our solar system and planets around other stars, but I reject the accepted origins theories on all these objects.

Ross has published much in criticism of the young-age creationist viewpoint that holds Earth and the universe to be only several thousand years old. Ross has been critical of a number of age arguments used by young-age creationists. Though Ross does not emphasize geology too much, he does not believe Noah's Flood was a geographically global event but he considers it to have been "universal" in wiping out human life on Earth.

Regarding living things and biological evolution, Ross holds to a view known as Progressive Creation. This view has it that there were certain points in the evolution of life where natural processes were insufficient and so God supernaturally intervened to create certain organisms or give evolution a "boost" if you will. Evolution would proceed until something such as perhaps an extinction event prevented evolution from progressing in some way, and then God would intervene supernaturally. Two of the times in Earth history when God intervened would be the origin of the first living cells on the early Earth and the creation of the first true humans. Ross argues that living cells could not form from nonliving chemicals without divine intervention. (I would agree with this.) Then regarding man, Ross believes there were "Pre-Adamite" creatures that paleontologists call hominids. These ape-man intermediates Ross considers to have been merely "intelligent mammals," but not human.

Dr. Ross takes the view of the Genesis 1 creation account known as the Day-Age theory. He sees the six days of the

creation week as metaphorical terms that represent long periods of time. He breaks up Earth history (and evolutionary time) into seven overlapping “day” periods. The six days of the creation account vary in length from less than 100 million years to about 3.5 billion years (for the third day). This is all spelled out on a chart found on the reasons.org web site. Along with this comes the concept that the seventh day, God’s day of rest, is a continuing day that is still continuing in the present. Ross also does not believe that physical death of animals or humans was caused by Adam and Eve’s sin (the historic Fall). Ross sees references to death being caused by sin, such as in Genesis 2, 3, and Romans 5:12, as referring only to spiritual death. Thus, Ross does not believe that the pre-Flood Earth was significantly different than the present Earth.

Biblical-Theological Problems

Dr. Ross takes a certain view of God’s revelation that departs from the standard historic Christian position. Ross suggests that people can learn about God from observations of Nature enough to have knowledge of salvation. He treats Nature (actually evolutionary interpretations of Nature) as equally authoritative to the written revelation in Scripture. Thus he almost totally eliminates the distinction between General Revelation (from observations of how God created Nature) and Special Revelation (in the Bible). This is a very serious error. Consider the following from Ross’ books.

In *The Fingerprint of God*, page 179 Ross states, “The plan of salvation as stated in the Bible can be seen through observation of the universe around us. Thus all human beings have a chance to discover it.” This is a very serious misunderstanding of Scripture. Ross goes on to argue that Job learned the plan of salvation just from observations of Nature. Ross has referred to Nature as the “sixty-seventh book” of the Bible, and that it is “on an equal footing” with God’s written revelation. This essentially rejects the important concept from the

reformers of the 1500’s, expressed in the term “Sola Scriptura.” This meant that only Scripture is authoritative and that God’s written revelation is sufficient for revealing God’s will to mankind.

Because Ross treats scientific observations as equal to Scripture, he sometimes uses evolutionary science to determine how to interpret Biblical passages. One example of this I think is about light and the creation of the stars. The creation account puts light on the very first day, when God said, “Let there be light, and there was light (Gen. 1:3).” But, the Sun and stars were not created until the fourth day. Ross reinterprets this in terms of atmospheric effects. He claims that light from the Big Bang existed in the universe and stars and galaxies would have existed prior to the first day of the creation week. However the light in the universe did not first reach Earth’s surface until the first day. Then more light from our Sun became visible on the fourth day, when Earth’s atmosphere became transparent or clouds cleared. Thus, in *Creation and Time* Ross says on page 149 “Light was not created on the first creation day.”

This type of view violates several principles of Biblical interpretation and ignores several aspects of how Genesis 1 is written. One of the important things to notice in the creation account is the way it quotes God saying “Let there be” Then, it will say something like “. . . and it was so.” Ross completely misses the significance of this apparently. The creation account is emphasizing the authority of God’s commands. God speaks things into existence from nothing! Thus, creation of things that did not exist happens because of God’s command and immediately upon God’s command. This view of Genesis 1 is strongly affirmed in other passages, such as Psalm 33:6,9 and Romans 4:17 It is completely inappropriate to force a foreign concept, namely the Big Bang, onto the text of Scripture in this way. There are several things about the creation week account that do not follow the order of events of Big Bang

and evolution theory. Ross' attempts to reconcile these discrepancies are awkward and inadequate.

The Day-Age Interpretation

Another problem with Dr. Ross' view of Genesis is the Day-Age interpretation of the creation account. Young-age creationists have written so much about this and certain Bible scholars have also written about the problems with interpreting the days of creation as long periods of time.

Ross makes statements to the effect that the Hebrew word for day, "yom," does not always mean a literal day but can refer to some indefinite period of time. Sometimes advocates of the Day-Age view will say that the days are figurative, thus they may not be of a definite length. First, if you want to figure out the meaning of a word in the Bible, you have to see how it is used in context. The meaning of a word is not determined by a dictionary, but by how it is used in context. Hugh Ross seems to look up definitions and make a totally arbitrary choice of what definition suits his desired view, rather than really examining the context and usage of the word. There are many places in Ross' writings where particular arguments are made about Hebrew words having certain meanings. But Ross is not trained in Hebrew and so this should be kept in mind. I am not trained in Hebrew either, but other creationists have documented a number of errors in Ross' use of Hebrew dictionaries.

I think there are very clear indicators in Genesis 1 that the days are literal days. It is not that Genesis chapter 1 is hard to understand, it is that people have difficulty believing it. This includes a number of Bible Scholars who will acknowledge that the days should be interpreted literally but yet they do not actually believe the creation account is real history (James Barr is a well known example).

How do we know the days are literal days in Genesis 1? First, there is a number attached to the word yom, such as "first day," "second day," etc. In my Genesis book I provide what is probably a complete list of

all the verses in the Old Testament that have a numerical adjective near the word yom, such as first, fifth, seventh, and a number of other possibilities. There are hundreds of occurrences similar to this in the Old Testament. All of them I have looked up are talking about literal 24 hour type days without question. Secondly, there is the phrase from Genesis 1 saying "and there was evening and there was morning" placed just before the day number. This is a description of the day-night cycle and is a clear indicator that literal days are in view.

Regarding time and the days, neither saying the days are "indefinite periods of time" nor saying they are "figurative" are logical for harmonizing with evolution. To make Genesis 1 reconcile with evolution, what you need is not indefinite periods of time, but definite periods of time. If the days are definite periods of time, such as is pointed out in the chart on Dr. Ross' web site, then the days are not figurative. On the other hand, if the days are figurative, then how can they even tell anything about time and how can they be related to evolution?

Furthermore, even when the word yom is used in the Bible in a non-literal sense, it is never a period of time remotely as long as what is proposed by Hugh Ross and Day-Age supporters. There are expressions like "day of battle," "day of feasting," "day of the Lord," and others. These expressions always seem to refer to when some event occurs or in some cases a certain portion of one person's lifetime. The expression "The Day of the Lord" has prophetic significance related to God's judgment in the future. Depending on how you interpret prophetic passages (which is much more difficult than Genesis 1) this could refer to some period of years, such as 7 years for instance, or maybe to a lifetime at most. There is nowhere I can find in the Old Testament where the word for day (yom) is used to refer to anything more than one person's lifetime. So there simply is no possible justification for interpreting the days of the creation week as long periods of time.

Besides, if Genesis 1 seems unclear, try Exodus 20:11. You can't get any clearer.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.” There is no way of claiming Exodus 20:11 is figurative because it is located in a didactic (teaching) passage about the Ten Commandments. Thus in Exodus 20, if it were not referring to literal days, the Sabbath commandment would not make sense. When a didactic passage (Exodus 20) comments on a narrative (such as Genesis is) it is proper procedure to let the didactic passage inform how to interpret the narrative. To do otherwise would create a point of inconsistency, a contradiction, between the two passages. Ross and others who reject the literal view of the creation days often seem to ignore Exodus 20:11.

Another issue that arises with the Day-Age view of Genesis 1 is the nature of the seventh day. Ross argues that since the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning” is missing on the seventh day that this indicates that day was not completed. Hebrews 4:1-4 is also used to argue that the seventh day is a continuing day thousands of years long. The argument then says that since the seventh day is a long period of time, the other days could be as well. However, Genesis 2 refers to the seventh day in the past tense and describes that God rested from creating on that day. This to me points to a finished day. Because the seventh day was special, it does not follow the formula followed on the other days.

Regarding Hebrews 4, I would recommend consulting an article by creationist Andrew Kulikovsky, “God’s Rest in Hebrews 4:1-11.” Kulikovsky has a web site where some of his published papers can be found. To get to this article go to <http://hermeneutics.kulikovskyonline.net/hermeneutics/hermeneutics.htm> and look under the heading of “Sermons and Articles” for “God’s Rest in Hebrews 4:1-11.”

This paper deals with technical details of the Hebrew in Genesis and the Greek in Hebrews 4 on this question. Kulikovsky has

written a number of excellent papers on creation issues that hinge on the original Biblical languages. Kulikovsky makes the following comment about the concept of the continuing seventh day and Hebrews 4. “However, this argument is based on faulty exegesis and a total neglect of the historical and literary context, and is therefore fundamentally flawed.” This issue has been addressed for years by creationists. Ross has apparently ignored many criticisms of young-age creationists. In a review of Ross’ recent book, *The Genesis Question*, Jonathan Sarfati points out Ross repeats the same ideas as he put in his earlier books. Sarfati’s review of Ross’ recent book is a must read. It can be found on the following web site:

<http://www.trueorigin.org/hughross01.asp>

There are other Biblical issues that could be mentioned related to Dr. Ross’ views. In spite of the problems with his theology and exegesis, there are a number of well known Christian Bible Scholars and ministry leaders that have endorsed Ross. We could mention the significant issue with Ross’ view of how death relates to the Fall. I will not address it here because I have addressed this in my article “Why God would not Use Evolution?” Ross does not see physical human death as being a judgement associated with Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. This is a serious theological problem for Ross but it is too much to deal with in detail here. In addition to Sarfati’s article above, I would recommend the following web pages on this issue:

<http://creationanswers.net/biblical/WHYGODEV.HTM>

<http://www.serve.com/herrmann/ross.htm>

The second site above is by Mathematician and creationist Dr. Robert Herrmann. His treatment of the death and Fall issue is perhaps the best I have seen.

Science Issues and Ross’ Teachings

I will only comment briefly on some science issues that relate to Ross’ teachings. First of all, Ross shows an especially inadequate knowledge of creationist geology, though he criticizes it often. He does not

believe Noah's Flood was global geographically and says that Noah and his family could not have taken care of all the animals on the Ark, or even have fit them all on the Ark. These issues have been addressed in many creationist sources, especially John Woodmorappe's book, "Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study." In my *Our Genesis* book I deal with the clear indications in Genesis that Noah's Flood was global. See Genesis 7:21-22 for example.

There are a number of science issues where Hugh Ross overstates or distorts the issues. This even includes his own field of astronomy. Dr. Danny Faulkner, a creationist astronomer, has documented some of these problems in a paper in the journal TJ, which can be found in the following web page:

<http://www.trueorigin.org/hughross02.asp>

What I find most disturbing about Ross on his science is the way he attempts to relate questionable or highly theoretical advanced concepts from physics and cosmology to the Bible. He says the Big Bang was taught first in the Bible and he tries to explain aspects of God's nature in terms of String Theory. String Theory is a very controversial theory in physics that involves there being 9 physical dimensions. Whether String Theory is true or not (there is no experimental evidence for it) it is the height of presumption and inappropriate eisegesis to claim to understand deep things about God's nature in terms of String Theory.

Ross also overstates how much support for the existence of God and the intelligent design of the universe that there is in the astronomy community. Many of Ross' arguments for the design of the universe presume Big Bang theory. No idea that presumes the Big Bang can possibly be a valid argument for intelligent design because it contradicts Scripture. There are valid evidences for the design of the universe, but I would never recommend Ross' materials as good sources on that subject.

My hope is that Christians will be more discerning and aware of the problems with Dr. Ross' teachings. People do need

reasons to believe, but they need Biblical answers that they can count on.

Kansas and Science Standards Again

In Kansas, the state in which I grew up, the issue of science standards has come up again recently. After attempting to change what students would be tested over in 1999, the State School Board changed. Conservatives that were on that Board were voted out of office and the proposed changes to Kansas tests in science were thrown out. However, recently in 2004, conservatives were voted back onto the State Board and so in May of 2005 there was a new round of hearings in Kansas regarding how evolution should be taught. The aims of the Board this time appear to only be to allow arguments critical of evolution to be allowed. So there is much discussion of the Intelligent Design view. Even this has been met with hostility and resistance from scientific organizations. National and state scientific organizations boycotted the hearings done by the State Board, viewing them as "rigged" against evolution. Instead, they sent a lawyer to represent their interests. (My question is why do these scientific organizations need legal representation at a school board meeting?)

I do not know what the outcome of all this will be, though I applaud these new efforts from the State Board. Their goals are more modest this time. The State of Ohio has had some success with a similar approach. I hope that somehow Kansas students can be exposed to a more balanced view. But in my opinion, the State Board should pay much more attention to the wishes of the parents who have their children in the public schools, than to the scientific organizations. The scientific organizations do not really have any business telling schools what to do, but parents do. The scientific organizations have made their point of view abundantly clear. The State Board should try to guard against discrimination and restriction of the freedom of speech of students and teachers that question evolution.