

## Examining Evolution

### Part 5- The Evidence and the Christian Response

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Before we discuss the evidence that Evolutionists forward in support of the theory, let's begin with a few initial thoughts. The Theory of Evolution is not going away anytime soon. We Christians could waste tremendous amounts of time by sinking into endless debates over this theory. We can, however, at least prepare some responses so that if the opportunity arises, we can discuss this theory.

It is not the intent of this session to disprove Evolution. The theory is too deeply ingrained not only in the scientific community but in our society as well. Evolution also has a built into it specific mechanisms that would prevent us from disproving it. The scientific community will simply not stand for disproving Evolution because it's the only game in town. If we disallow any religious implications to origins, such as creation, there's no other choice other than Evolution. The scientific community will stick to its guns, come what may.

Neither are we attempting to support or prove Scripture. We start down a very slippery slope when we look for outside verification of Scripture. Scripture stands on its own. The history of science has shown that science is very prone to change. If we look for external verification of Scripture, we are placing our trust in the least firm foundation, namely human wisdom.

Some Christians in their zeal to defend creationism have accused Evolution of not being science. I believe we need to be careful with this sentiment. You will certainly not win anybody over by insulting them. Evolution is based on observations and data. The conclusions the Evolutionist draws, however, contradict Scripture, and that's where the disagreement lies. We may point out the weaknesses of the theory. We may question the validity of the theory in that it makes no testable predictions, and puts speculation forward as fact. But to claim that Evolution is not science is not giving the reason for the hope we have with gentleness and respect.

It goes beyond the scope of this session to discuss the history of science and how the Scientific Communities operate under distinct paradigms. But for our discussion, it is helpful that we recall the concept of the paradigm. We Christians embrace the paradigm of creation, and therefore we look at the world through this lens. Evolutionists, on the other hand, see the world through the lens of Evolution. In other words, they don't see the data and then accept Evolution; instead, it's the other way around. Consequently, picking out a few ideas as evidence of Evolution is overly simplistic. To Evolutionists, all science supports Evolution.

Therefore, the evidence is not going to persuade anyone to abandon Evolution. Instead, we have to replace the paradigm of Evolution with a new paradigm. And, of course, that paradigm is faith in God's Word. We can't do that, that's up to the Holy Spirit.

Before we look at some of the evidence that Evolution points to, I will warn you that I am not going to satisfy all of your questions. Once again, it's not our intent to disprove Evolution by destroying piece by piece the evidence that supports it. We can, however, be aware of what the theory teaches, and at least be prepared with a response.

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The most difficult of all our concepts is what to make of fossils. Christians do not dispute the fact that fossils do represent once-living creatures. The disagreement comes in the aging of the fossils. The time span of the geologic column is difficult to arrive at and is open interpretation. Secular geologists look at the layers of the geologic column, and they've done their best to come up with timeframes. And, of course, those timeframes disagree with what we Christians believe the age of the earth to be.

Entire books have been written about this topic, and it goes way beyond the scope of our session to delve deeply include this topic. But for our purposes, we can make a few points. We Christians do not debate the idea that species can go extinct, but that does not prove or disprove Evolution. We know that the earth is tainted by sin; therefore, it's well within the realm of possibility that species may go extinct.

Where did fossils come from, how old are they? How did they form? Again, entire books have been written on this topic, so a complete discussion is not possible here. But the final answer is that we simply don't know. We weren't around to observe the formation of fossils. We have no direct records of observations of fossils forming. We don't understand how the geologic column was formed. Ultimately, that's where we have to leave it. Let's not impart a definite answer to a question where the answer is unknowable.

We must be careful about ascribing all of these formations to the Flood. We have very few details about the physical nature of the Flood. The Flood could account for some fossils, but to say that the Flood created fossils is making a statement that we simply can't back up. Remember that everything about the Flood was miraculous. We don't know what the world was like before the Flood. We don't know what the world was like during the Flood, or immediately after the Flood. The account of the Flood is included in Scripture not to answer questions about physical geography, but to demonstrate that God's judgment and His mercy; sin and grace.

Something else to keep in mind is that when God created the world, it had apparent age. We can see the stars even though the light is coming from millions of miles away. Adam and Eve were full-grown adults with the appearance of age. Vegetation was fully formed. We didn't have to wait for geologic processes to form rocks or continents. Was the geologic column and fossils part of that creation? Again, we don't know.

We do know that the earth has undergone at least two significant changes, the Fall and the Flood. We have no idea of how things changed in those two significant events.

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The second of all our pieces of evidence deals with dating methods. Again, the literature on this topic is extensive, but for our discussion, we will elaborate just a bit. The basic idea behind these dating methods is that radioactive isotopes naturally decay into more stable isotopes. By measuring the amount of radioactive isotope and comparing it to the amount of stable isotope, scientists have developed models to determine the age of the specimen.

Carbon 14 dating compares the amount of radioactive carbon-14 remaining in a specimen to an amount presumed to be present at death. This method is only used to age once-living specimens; rocks and fossils are not subject to carbon 14 dating. The timescale for carbon 14 dating is also relatively limited in that it is measured in thousands of years and not millions or billions of years.

Radiometric dating is based on the decay of other radioactive isotopes like uranium, thorium, and rubidium, amongst others. This method is used to date rocks or fossils. Its time scale is much broader, measuring millions or even billions of years.

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While these dating methods are widely used and accepted, they can be questioned. The first point to understand about these methods is that they are mathematical models and have never been observed directly. Obviously, it is impossible to verify a measurement of millions or billions of years directly. Whenever we take data and extrapolate it great distances, we risk inaccurate predictions. For example, if you're going to drive across the country, you would likely not base your estimated time of arrival on your progress during the first half-hour of the trip.

It's also worth pointing out that the dating methods make three essential assumptions. The first assumption deals with how much of the isotope was present when the specimen was formed. We have no way of directly observing that condition, so our initial condition must be an assumption. The second assumption is that the only change in the concentration of the isotope is due to decay. The assumption is that no further radioactive isotope is added, neither has any of the final isotopes somehow subtracted, nor has any of the original radioactive isotopes somehow been subtracted. The third assumption is that the rate of decay does not change. Once again, this assumption is impossible to verify over billions of years.

And again, we should keep in mind the fact that the earth was created with some apparent age. Whether this applies to radioactive isotopes or not is anybody's guess; ultimately, we can't know.

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Another argument put forward by evolutionists is the fact that all living creatures, with only a very few exceptions, use the same genetic code. The fact that all living organisms use DNA to store information and that information is read and translated by very similar cellular mechanisms points to the fact that there must have been a common ancestor.

Christians can respond differently. We can see this common genetic code as evidence of a common Creator. The fact that a Creator could institute a remarkable data storage and retrieval system and make use of that across His creation is perfectly logical.

This common genetic code has made possible remarkable advances in the field of genetics and medicine as genetic results obtained from tests on one creature can be applied to humans. We can also see God's wisdom in that I can use DNA from other creatures' cells (my food) digest that DNA, and the use of the nucleotides to build my DNA.

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Another argument in favor of Evolution deals with common biomolecular machinery. Many biomolecules are remarkably similar in most living creatures. The molecule illustrated is ATP synthase. The function of this molecule is to synthesize ATP. Whether we find this molecule in the dandelion or a squid or human, the molecule displays essentially the same structure. The Evolutionist claims that this points to a common ancestor. Much of evolutionary history is being conducted by examining the

biomolecules and looking at similarities and differences. Creatures that share very similar biomolecules are classified as being closely related.

Once again, the Christian sees things differently. We see this as evidence of a common Creator. It is much the same argument as the previous piece of evidence. God designed these molecules and made use of them in different creatures.

If there should be anyone who accepts a design the theory of origins, it should be the biochemist. These molecules are amazingly intricate and very complex. The ATP synthase pictured is composed of thousands of amino acids. Portions of this molecule actually move. It performs its job continually with no maintenance, no downtime, and no intervention our part. You have trillions of these molecules in your cells all functioning to produce ATP, and they function all by themselves, and in total silence. There is nothing manmade that even comes close to approaching the remarkable nature of these biomolecules. These molecules are far more intricate than anything humanity has devised. They are much more intricate than a cell phone or satellite or space shuttle. And yet, the Evolutionist simply says how remarkable it is that these molecules evolved.

The fact that most living things share similar biomolecules also has a very practical function. Because we share these molecules with so many other creatures, that means I have food to eat. Can you imagine the results if the only compatible molecules to the human body must be human? What would be my food supply? The Christian sees evidence of God's design.

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An illustration like this accompanies almost every biology text. The concept is that of homologous structures. Homologous structures are structures or organs that descended for a common organ or structure from a common ancestor. The forelimbs pictured here is a typical example. Comparative anatomists claim that these limbs all originate from the forelimb of a common ancestor and gradually evolved as the creature evolved. Once again, the Evolutionist points to the common ancestor.

The Christian response is the same as before. We see evidence of a Creator. We understand how God designed each forelimb to perform the function unique to that creature. We see the weight-bearing capability of the horse's leg compared with the stretching framework of the bat's wing. Despite the similarities that the comparative anatomist sees, we can see that the structures are very different from each other. It would require a considerable number of evolutionary changes to change a leg into a wing or a flipper.

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A more recent development is that of genomic data. As the genomic sequences of more and more creatures are determined, geneticists have discovered that humans share a great many genes with other creatures. Some genes are conserved over a great many creatures. Geneticists have shown that genes can be transferred between different species, even different kinds. Evolutionary biology is making use of conservative genetic sequences to establish evolutionary history and to determine the extent to which organisms may be related.

Again, the Evolutionist points to a common ancestor from which a common genetic code descended. And again, the Christian sees things differently, seeing a common Creator.

When we examine the workings of DNA, RNA, and the machinery that is used to store and copy and transmit genetic information, we can't help but see design. The mechanisms involved are incredibly complex and intricate. In fact, people are starting to use artificial DNA for data storage, copying, and retrieval because it is more efficient than the hard drives and flash drives that we use today. And once again, the Evolutionist simply says how remarkable it is that these mechanisms evolved.

The fact that the Creator instituted an incredibly intricate design amongst all his creatures is hardly surprising. The fact that we share genes with other creatures is of no concern to us simply because living creatures primarily operate with much the same machinery at the cellular level. We need the genes to construct these common molecular machines. This condition in no way invalidates the idea that mankind is the crown of God's creation. The genes simply governed how the molecules are built to keep our body functioning. Our elevated status as God's crown of creation lies in the fact that He gave us a soul, He gave us consciousness, He gave us a moral code, and most importantly, that He gave us a plan of salvation.

The fact that God's creatures do have genes allows for certain capabilities and flexibility to meet changing needs. The Christian has no problem with a limited natural selection. Creatures can change, within certain limitations, to match the changing environment.

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Let's wrap up our discussion with some closing thoughts.

The first thought I'd like to leave you with is that God does not give us all the answers, and He never promised to do so. Scripture is silent about many of the questions that we have. We should not be ashamed or intimidated when we have to answer, "I don't know."

God does not reveal to us in any great detail what creation was like before the Flood, the time between the Fall and the Flood, and the time immediately after the Flood. We have no idea of what God's perfect design was because His creation was not tainted by sin. To try to answer questions about the distant past can only lead to speculation. When did the dinosaurs roam the earth? When did the dinosaurs go extinct? Did the Flood kill them? Was there an ice age? Was there a Pangea? Did God create viruses? These are questions we will never be able to answer because we weren't there to see it, and the Bible is silent about it. It may be interesting to speculate, but we should never teach speculation as truth.

Keep in mind that the creation that we experience today is a far cry from the way God originally designed it. God created everything perfectly, but now it is tainted by sin. I doubt that we could even comprehend the perfect creation that God established initially. To try to project our imperfect interpretations of an imperfect world onto God's perfect creation is pointless.

We all have a desire to understand things that are happening around us. We want the security of understanding, even control. God never promised us that. God does not obligate himself to act in ways that make sense to us, that are logical to us, or even that we can understand. When God does allow us a measure of understanding, we should acknowledge that with gratitude as the blessing that it is, but we need not be surprised when something exceeds our understanding. In matters like these, we simply trust in God's grace, mercy, and wisdom.

God does tell us enough about the origins to set the stage for his plan of salvation. He reveals that things were perfect, but that sin entered the world. He reveals the Savior and how His work becomes mine. The mission of the church is not to disprove every human teaching, Evolution included. The mission of the church is to proclaim the Word of God in its truth and purity and to proclaim that plan of salvation.

We will never argue an Evolutionist into accepting creation because that is a matter of faith. We can, however, use discussions like this as a bridge to get to the more critical issues of sin and grace and salvation.