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REASON & REVELATION

A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences

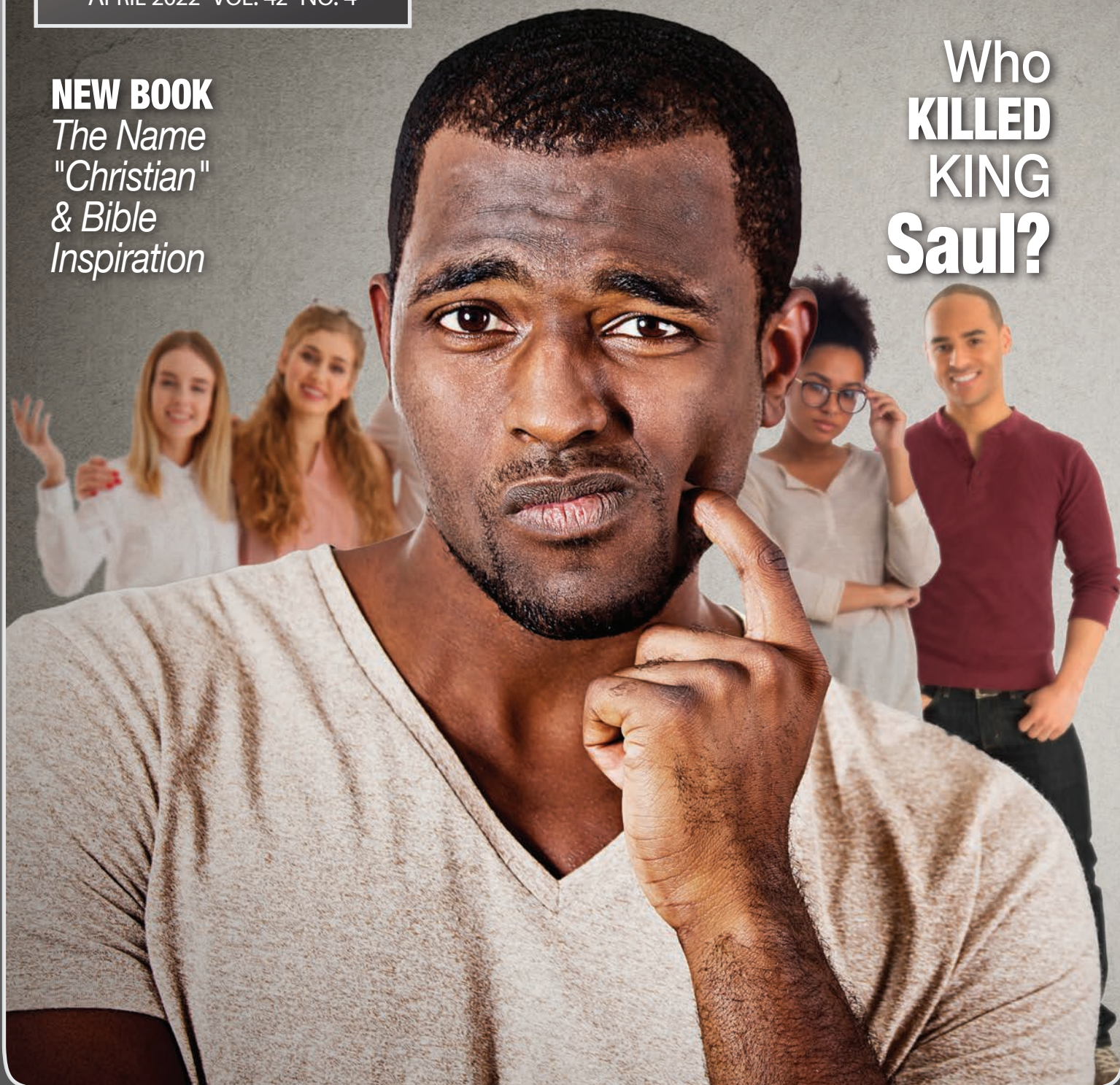
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Should **Christians** **Accept** Evolution and an **Old Earth** to Win **Converts?**

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Article In Brief...

Is it good for Christians to oppose Evolution and an old Earth? If such beliefs are more palatable to potential converts, should Christians accept them? The alarming implications of the doctrines of Evolution and an old Earth make opposition to them critical in light of reason and Scripture.

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article is the first installment in a two-part series. Part II will appear in the May issue of *R&R*.]

WE regularly encounter secular individuals who scoff at our strong stand against Evolution¹ and its claim of a billions-of-years old Universe. From time to time, however, we encounter Bible-believing, self-identifying Christians who vehemently oppose our work on those subjects as well. They often argue that our teaching on a literal six-day Creation week 6-8,000 years ago causes many people immediately to reject Christianity and the Bible, since such positions seem far-fetched to some. They believe we should “back off” of such subjects so that more people will consider Christianity to be palatable and come to Christ. We should, they argue, accept, along with the Bible, mainstream scientific

thinking on Evolution and the age of the Earth, allowing for compromises like “theistic evolution” and “progressive creationism.” Why do we oppose Evolution and an old Earth? **Should** we? Are we running off potential converts and keeping people from Christ?

In truth, we can show, through our correspondence with our audience over the years, that our positions on Evolution and the age of the Earth have actually caused many to develop more faith in Scripture and, subsequently, come to Christ. It is, however, no doubt true in some cases that there are people who “write off” Christianity because of “Young Earth Creationist” teachings. So, should we teach Creation/anti-Evolution more and help strengthen faith? Or should we teach the subjects less and “run fewer people off”? Ultimately, the answer is not up to us and our opinion. We must use

reason and revelation from God to determine what God would have us to do. Here are seven reasons we believe it to be **essential** to oppose Evolution and an old Earth.

REASON #1: IF EVOLUTION IS RIGHT, THEN THE BIBLE IS WRONG

FIRST, if evolutionary theory is true, then the Genesis account of Creation is, at best, misleading and, at worst, inaccurate—which would categorize the Bible as uninspired. Genesis 1-11 is straightforward in its declaration that the Universe was created in six literal days, and it gives no indication that it should be taken in any other way. It is not couched in figurative or poetic language, like that found in other places in Scripture. It is narrative, reporting history, and is treated as such throughout the rest of Scripture, by virtually every New Testament writer and by Christ, Himself.²

Some, attempting to inject a figurative meaning of “day” into Genesis 1, argue “The days of Genesis 1 could be millions of years each, because, with God, a day is the same thing as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8—‘...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day’). So, God could’ve meant that each day was long.” Is 2 Peter 3:8 truly justification for inflating the days of Genesis 1? A careful study of 2 Peter 3:8 (e.g., the dual use of the word “as”) and the surrounding context³ reveals that 2 Peter 3:8 is utilizing simile, a figure of speech **not to be taken literally**, comparable to that used in Psalm 90:4—“For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.” Second Peter 3:8 in no way teaches that every time the word “day” is used in conjunction with God’s activity in the Bible, we must convert the word “day” into 1,000 Earth years—as though God

simply is not capable of communicating with humans using human language. Even if such were the case, 1,000 years is a far cry from 2,300,000,000 years, which is closer to the length each Creation day would have to be to attempt to make Genesis 1 fit with the current conventional age of the Universe.

In truth, Moses used practically every means at his disposal in the Hebrew language to convey the idea that the Creation of the entire Universe consisted of six normal days, not millions or billions of years in length, and without gaps before or in between them.⁴ The Hebrew word for “day” that is used in Genesis 1 is *yom*, and it almost always means either a full 24-hour day or the 12-hour period of daylight. Some argue, however, that in some cases, *yom* can mean a general, rather than specific, period of time like, for example, “In my day, we walked everywhere.”⁵ As in modern English, the context of a statement must be used to determine how a word that has multiple meanings is being used. We do so constantly, without a second thought. “In my day, we went to the store during the day, and we didn’t wait three days to get it done.” We have no problem understanding what that sentence means, even though “day” is used in three different ways in the same sentence. Contextual clues help the reader to interpret the uses of “day” correctly.

Similarly, Moses helped his audience to understand his use of the word “day” in reference to the six days of Creation by, for example, modifying it with numbers: “So the evening and the morning were the **first** day” (1:5); “...**second** day” (1:8); “...**third** day” (1:13); etc. Using numbers in conjunction with the word “day” limits its meaning to normal days. Moses further helped his audience by using the words “evening” and “morning” in con-



junction with “day.” In the words of Hebrew scholar, Justin Rogers, “While it is true that the Hebrew term ‘day’ can be used in a non-literal sense in other contexts, the terms ‘evening’ (*erev*) and ‘morning’ (*bōqer*) are **always** used in a literal sense.... **There is to my knowledge no place in the Bible in which the terms ‘evening and morning’ refer to a broad scope of time. They are always literal....**”⁶ Ironically, Moses **could** have used the Hebrew word, *dor*, which refers to a long period of time (an “age” or “generation”), but he did not. He used *yom*, modified it with numbers, and used “evening” and “morning” with the word, clearing up any confusion about its meaning. There is little more he could do to communicate to his

audience on behalf of God that the days of Genesis 1 were normal days.

Later in his writings, in Exodus 20:11, Moses clarified his meaning in Genesis 1 once again. “For **in six days** the Lord made the heavens and the Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day....” One would have to be unwilling to accept Moses’ clear declaration to misunderstand his meaning. What aspect of the Universe is left outside of the heavens (i.e., space), the Earth, the sea, and **all that is in them?** According to Moses, the Universe was not created gradually, in steps over eons of time.⁷ **Everything** was created in six days, not six billion years, and God rested on the seventh day.

Notably, the seven-day week concept, which characterizes Jewish and Christian calendars, is based on that idea, with the Jews celebrating the Sabbath on the literal seventh day of every literal week, not the seventh billion “years.” Question: did the Jews get it wrong? Did they misunderstand Moses? No. The Jews kept the Sabbath day after every six literal days of every literal week, and if they did not keep the Sabbath Day

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correctly, they would have been executed (Exodus 31:14), as was the case in an incident recorded in Numbers 15:32-36. Proper observance of the Sabbath Day was crucial to the Jews. They recognized that they were to mirror their weeks after Creation week.

If Evolution and deep time⁸ are right, then Moses was wrong in his writings, implying that the first five books of the Bible are uninspired. But that would not be the extent of the damage. Was Paul wrong when, in referring to man, he highlighted in Romans 1:18-32 that God's attributes have been clearly seen "since the creation of the world"? If man did not arrive until roughly two million years ago, then he was not around anywhere near the Creation of the world based on the deep-time Evolution timeline. If Paul is wrong, then how can Romans through Philemon—the bulk of the New Testament—be inspired?

But it gets even worse: in Luke 11:50-51, **Jesus** said that the shedding of Abel's blood occurred at "the **foundation** of the world." According to Evolution, the Big Bang Theory, and deep time, the Earth formed roughly 4.54 billion years ago. Humans, once again, did not arrive on the scene until roughly two

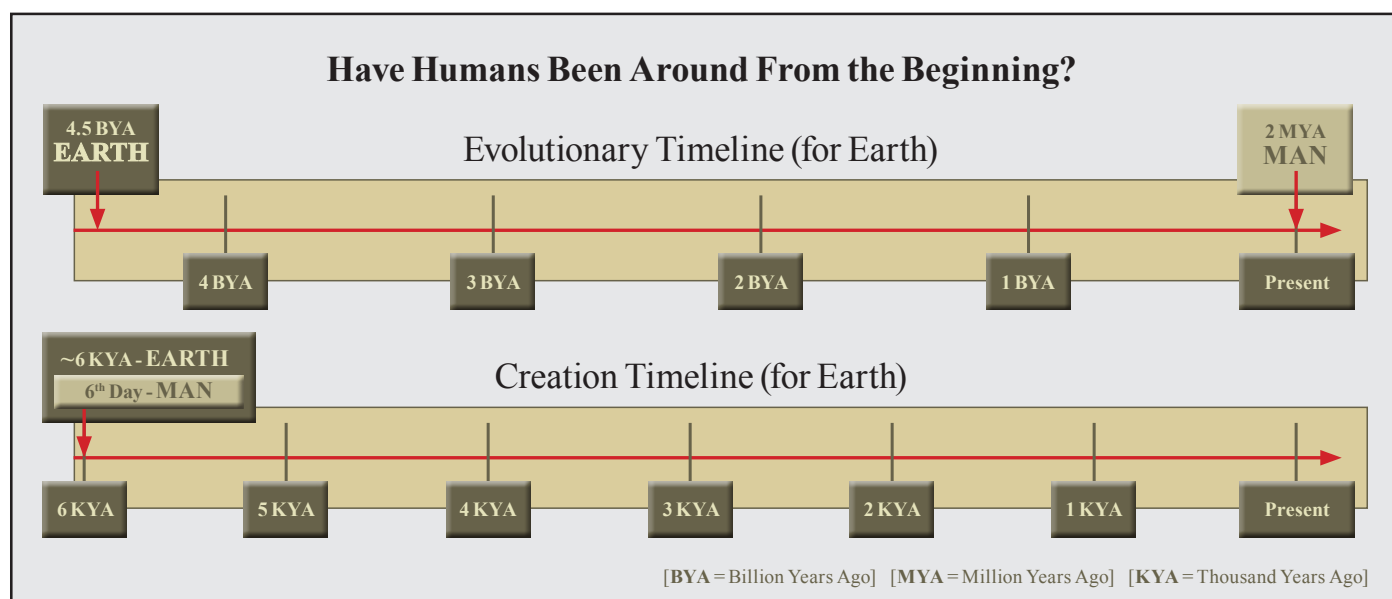
million years ago. In other words, humans arrived on the scene at the very **end** of the world as we know it, not its "foundation." According to the Big Bang model, 99.96% of the Earth's existence was spent without humans. In Mark 10:6, Jesus said God made man "from the **beginning of creation**, male and female," quoting from Genesis 1:27—the creation of humans. Again, according to modern "science," the Universe is roughly 13.8 billion years old, meaning that humans were not around "from the beginning of creation." Instead, 99.99% of the time that the Universe was in existence passed prior to the emergence of humans. Was Jesus wrong? **If so, He is not deity, and our faith is in vain.**

The Hebrew language does not allow for Evolution and an old Earth in the Bible. The Bible writers do not allow them. Jesus, Himself, does not allow them. And, ironically, Evolution itself will not allow a merger with the Bible, either.

- According to Genesis 1, the formless Earth was created initially (1:1), prior to the creation of the stars on Day 4 (1:14-18). The Big Bang model has our solar system beginning to form

roughly nine billion years after the first stars began to form.

- According to the Bible, the Earth was initially covered with water (Genesis 1:2,6),⁹ while popular science today argues that the Earth was initially molten.
- The Big Bang model postulates that our Sun formed roughly 3.9 billion years before the first land plants evolved on Earth. The biblical model places the creation of plants on Day 3 and the Sun on Day 4. If there was a gap of time between Days 3 and 4 (i.e., Multiple Gap Theory) or if each day was millions of years in length (i.e., Day Age Theory), how did the plants survive without photosynthesis throughout the long period of darkness/night (1:5)?
- Many plants require pollination and symbiotic relationships with flying creatures, but flying creatures were created two days after the plants (1:11-13,21-23), according to Genesis 1. If these days were millions of years in length, or if gaps of time existed between the Creation days, how did the plants survive for mil-



lions of years without their pollinators?

- The Big Bang model claims that fish preceded the evolution of fruit trees by hundreds of millions of years, while the biblical model states that fruit trees (1:12) were created two days prior to the swimming creatures (1:21).
- The evolutionary model claims that birds evolved from the dinosaurs, while the biblical model states that the flying creatures were created on Day 5 (1:21) and land creatures (including the dinosaurs) were created on Day 6 (1:24).

Bottom line: the Bible does not allow for Evolution or the injection of billions of years into Genesis 1. Either Evolution/old Earth are right and the Bible and Christ are wrong, or Evolution/old Earth are wrong and should be rejected as false and taught as such. Question: should we cease opposing Evolution to attract more potential converts, if such a position implies that the Bible and Christ are wrong and the basis of our faith is null and void?

REASON #2: BELIEF IN CREATION IS A MATTER OF FAITH

IF a person without any preconceived ideas about the origin of the Universe picks up the Bible and simply reads Genesis 1, taking it at face value, he will not arrive at the conclusion that Evolution or the Big Bang Theory are responsible for the origin of the Universe and life. Let an eight-year-old child read Genesis 1 and wait to see if he decides on his own that the text teaches the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, the Modified Gap Theory, the Multiple Gap Theory, or Progressive Creationism. Obviously, that would not happen without prompting from others. In fact, the unambiguous teaching of Genesis 1 about Cre-

ation is surely the reason why few have dreamed up such theories after reading Genesis 1 without prompting from some other (non-biblical) source. Now, the important question: what changed?

The answer is clear, is it not—especially to naturalists, skeptics, and atheists? In the 1800s, anti-Bible sentiment was gaining popularity in the world, and individuals like Charles Darwin and James Hutton arrived on the scene, developing and popularizing naturalistic (rather than supernaturalistic) science, Darwinian Evolution, and uniformitarian geology (all of which require an old Universe). Literal, biblical Creation and catastrophism (the global Flood) had been the mainstream beliefs in “Christian” nations, and naturalism, Evolu-

Evolution is a doctrine that undermines faith in the Bible.

tion, and uniformitarianism began to replace them. Since such beliefs were becoming mainstream in scientific circles and anything involving supernatural activity was beginning to be viewed as “unenlightened,” preposterous, and outdated, many scientists felt compelled to believe them. As scientists within Christendom began considering the new theories and feeling pressure from their peers, their biblical positions were naturally affected. **Their faith in what Scripture plainly teaches was shaken.**

It is likely the case that evidence was presented to the Bible-believer that caused him to question and, ultimately, re-interpret Scripture’s clear meaning. Every evidence that has been brought forth to substantiate Evolution and an old Earth, however, has been shown to be erroneous, irrelevant, or inadequate.¹⁰ Logically,

then, why would a person attempt to twist the Scriptures to force an unwarranted interpretation? Is peer pressure a legitimate reason to re-interpret Scripture? Certainly not (Exodus 23:2). Should a person put his faith in popular scientists over the straightforward teaching of God’s inspired Word?¹¹

Notice, then, that if a person capitulates to the irrational, self-contradictory worldview¹² of the admittedly **naturalistic** scientific community over Scripture, it becomes a faith issue.¹³ Such a person is failing to **believe** what God said and is putting his faith in naturalistic science instead. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...” (Hebrews 11:6). That truth makes opposition to Evolution an essential aspect of apologetics and evangelism, does it not?

REASON #3: IF EVOLUTION IS RIGHT, THEN WE CAN'T TRUST ANYTHING IN THE BIBLE

SINCE Genesis 1 has all the indicators of being a description of literal history,¹⁴ if Evolution is true anyway, then Genesis 1 cannot be what it seems to be. It must be figurative, poetic, mythic, and non-literal, despite its narrative indicators. Hebrew scholar Steven Boyd conducted a statistical analysis of words in 97 poetic and narrative biblical texts and showed that Genesis 1:1-2:3 unquestionably belong in the **narrative** category.¹⁵

So, if Genesis 1 should be interpreted as being non-historical, despite the evidence against that interpretation, then how can the proper interpretation of anything in the Bible be conclusively known? Anything and everything in the Bible becomes questionable as to whether it should be taken literally. Did the miracles of Christ actually happen, or are they to be taken figuratively? Was He really born

(cont. on p. 44)

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of a virgin, or are Matthew and Luke speaking hyperbolically? Are murder or adultery prohibitions to be taken literally? Accepting Evolution causes faith in Scripture to crumble, leading man to do what is “right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

In many cases, Evolution is a doctrine that, in the long run, undermines faith in the Bible and, therefore, leads many into total faithlessness.¹⁶ Why? One reason is summarized well by famous skeptic Michael Shermer: “[I]t doesn’t take a rocket scientist—or an English naturalist—to understand why the theory of the origin of species by means of natural selection would be so controversial: If new species are created naturally, what place, then, for God?”¹⁷ Further, the Bible becomes less trustworthy when we reject its straightforward teachings. If a person cannot trust the Bible’s most basic, clear, obvious teachings, how can he trust **any** of the Bible? How can he know with certainty what the Bible actually teaches?

In John 5:47, Jesus, in discussing the writings of Moses, said, “if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” If a person is unwilling to believe Moses’ account of Creation, then, according to Jesus, it will ultimately impact his faith in Christ. Is that not an important reason to oppose Evolution?

(to be continued)

ENDNOTES

¹ In this article, by “Evolution” (uppercase “E”) we mean “molecules-to-man Evolution,” which generally includes the Big Bang Theory coupled with Darwinian Evolution (i.e., the Theory of Evolution or Macroevolution). We distinguish “Evolution” in that sense from “evolution” (or microevolution). Microevolution (which, unlike Evolution, has been demonstrated in the real world and which does not contradict the Bible) refers to small changes within clearly established groups of creatures, amounting to mere variety. Microevolution occurs within

- phylogenetic boundaries that disallow evolution beyond divinely defined limits (Genesis 1:24; Galatians 6:7).
- ² Dave Miller (2020), “Genesis: Myth or History?” *Reason & Revelation*, 40[5]:50-57, <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2005-web.pdf>.
- ³ Eric Lyons (2007), “With God One Day is a Thousand Years?” Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/with-god-one-day-is-a-thousand-years-2191/>.
- ⁴ Cf. Justin Rogers (2015), “Does the Hebrew Word *Yom* Endorse an Old Earth?” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[9]:98-100, September, <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1509w.pdf>; Justin Rogers (2015), “Is Gap Theory Linguistically Viable?” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[12]:134-141, December, <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1512.pdf>.
- ⁵ Cf. Genesis 26:18; Joshua 24:31; Genesis 2:4.
- ⁶ Rogers, “Does the Hebrew...,” pp. 99-100, emp. in orig.
- ⁷ Contrary to the Gap Theory and its varieties.
- ⁸ i.e., a billions-of-years-old Universe.
- ⁹ Or possibly composed of water (cf. 2 Peter 3:5, ESV).
- ¹⁰ See www.apologeticspress.org.
- ¹¹ For evidence of the Bible’s inspiration, see Kyle Butt (2022), *Is the Bible God’s Word?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press); Dave Miller (2020), *The Bible is from God* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- ¹² Jeff Miller (2012), “The Atheistic Naturalist’s Self-Contradiction,” *Reason & Revelation Resources*, 31[5]:53, <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1205.pdf>.
- ¹³ This is not to say that all Evolutionists have accepted Evolution due to peer pressure.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Dave Miller, “Genesis: Myth of History?”
- ¹⁵ Don DeYoung (2008), *Thousands... Not Billions* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books), pp. 157ff.
- ¹⁶ Jeff Miller (2012), “Literal Creationists Holding Their Ground in the Polls,” *Reason & Revelation*, 32[9]:94-95, September, <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/1209w.pdf>.
- ¹⁷ Michael Shermer (2007), *Why Darwin Matters: The Case Against Intelligent Design* (New York, NY: Henry Holt), Kindle edition, Loc. 115.



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IT'S TIME TO GO DEEPER.



WHO KILLED KING SAUL?

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

BIBLE critics have long been fond of pointing out the differences in Scripture regarding how King Saul died. In fact, on most any extensive list of Old Testament “contradictions” is “the death of Saul.” In his book *Biblical Errancy*, Dennis McKinsey highlighted 1 Samuel 31:4, 2 Samuel 21:12, 2 Samuel 1:8-10, and 1 Chronicles 10:14 in his section titled simply “Contradictions.”¹ Skeptic Steve Wells listed these verses in *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible* (printed edition) as contradiction #197, asking the simple question, “How did Saul die?”²

So what does the Bible actually say about the death of King Saul?

- First Samuel 31 reveals that Saul “was severely wounded by the archers” (31:3) in Israel’s battle with the Philistines. In fact, it appears that he knew he was mortally wounded because he instructed his armorbearer, saying, “Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.’ But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore, **Saul took a sword and fell on it**. And when his armorbearer saw that **Saul was dead**, he also fell on his sword, and died with him” (31:4-5).
- Second Samuel 1 indicates that an Amalekite came to David after Israel’s defeat, presenting him with Saul’s crown and bracelet. The Amalekite

told David that, after Saul was wounded and in agonizing pain, the king instructed him to kill him. “So,” the Amalekite said, “**I stood over him and killed him**, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen” (1:8-10).

- Later in 2 Samuel, when David gathered and buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan, the inspired writer noted that “**the Philistines had struck down Saul**” (21:12).
- Lastly, the chronicler addressed the death of Saul in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, saying, “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore **He [the Lord] killed him**, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

The skeptic wants to know whether Saul killed himself, or if he was killed by the Amalekite, the Philistines, or God. How are these **verses** not, as Dennis McKinsey put it, “**versus**”?—“1 Samuel 31:4...**versus** 2 Samuel 21:12...**versus** 2 Samuel 1:8-10...**versus** 1 Chronicles 10:14.”³ How are these scriptures not contradictory?

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN A LIE AND INSPIRED TRUTH

The reader must keep in mind that the Bible writers recorded a number of lies made by various

people: Satan lied to Eve (Genesis 3:4); Cain lied to God (Genesis 4:9); Samson lied to Delilah (Judges 16:1-22); David lied to Ahimelech (1 Samuel 21:1-2); The older prophet of 1 Kings 13 lied to the younger prophet—a lie that cost the younger prophet his life; Job’s “friends” repeatedly made false allegations about him throughout the book of Job; Jesus’ enemies frequently lied about Him; etc. Keep in mind that many of the lies recorded in Scripture were told without further comment by the inspired writers. That is, the writers rarely stopped to identify and condemn the lies explicitly (e.g., Moses never explicitly called Satan’s statement in Genesis 3:4 a lie). Instead, the reader is expected to fairly infer what is implied (i.e., God told the truth, while Satan lied).

The young Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1:8-10 told a story that directly contradicts the inspired writer’s account only a few verses earlier. [**NOTE:** 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book. Thus, 1 Samuel 31:4 and 2 Samuel 1:10 are only separated by 20 brief verses within the same book.] Furthermore, we would not even have the young Amalekite’s words were they not written down **by the writer of Samuel**. Are we really supposed to conclude that the writer of Samuel could not recall who killed Saul within 20 verses?

Think about it: Who was lying in Genesis 2:17 and 3:4—God or Satan? Who was guilty of speaking falsehoods about Job—the inspired writer (Job 1:1), or Job’s “friendly” false accusers whom the writer quoted at length (e.g., Job 4-5; cf. 42:7-9)? To ask is to answer. Similarly, it should be relatively easy to differentiate between the **truthful** account of Saul’s death in 1 Samuel 31 and the **dishonest** report of the young Amalekite (recorded by the same penman) in 2 Samuel 1.

Why would the Amalekite lie, some ask? We are not told. Likely he thought his story, along with Saul's crown and bracelet, would bring him favor with Saul's worst enemy and the next king of Israel. He probably had in mind a reward of riches, honor, and power. Instead, David chose to execute him for having the audacity to end the life of (or at least **say** he ended the life of) a king previously chosen by God Himself (1 Samuel 9). The Amalekite alleged to do something that even David himself would not do (1 Samuel 24:6).

DID THE PHILISTINES KILL SAUL?

Even if 2 Samuel 1 can be logically explained, what about 2 Samuel 21:12 where the reader is reminded that “the **Philistines** had struck down Saul”? How can this be true if Saul killed himself (1 Samuel 31:4-6)? Two brief responses should adequately and reasonably answer this inquiry.

First, the words “struck down” (KJV; NKJV; NASB; NIV) are translated from the Hebrew *nākāh*. According to Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their respected Hebrew lexicon, *nākāh* can mean everything from “to strike, smite, hit,” and “beat,” to “kill.”⁴ In his *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, noted Hebrew scholar William Gesenius remarked that *nākāh* can mean anything from striking to killing, but it is used “mostly in the sense of hurting.”⁵ The King James translators used various words to translate *nākāh* throughout the Old Testament, including beat, smite, strike, punish, slay, kill, etc. The simple fact is, the penman of 2 Samuel 21:12 could easily have meant that King Saul was seriously struck down on Mount Gilboa, and not that the Philistines “killed him.”

Second, even if it could be proved that 2 Samuel 21:12 means the Philistines “killed” Saul in Gilboa, is there not a **legitimate, general sense** in which that term could be

used? Consider the 21st-century soldier who is mortally wounded in the heat of battle but makes it to a hospital in time to be hooked up to a number of machines, which help to extend his life for a few days. If doctors later remove the ventilator, feeding tube, etc., from the soldier (at the family's request), and he quickly dies, what might people truthfully report about the man's death? Surely that he gave his life in the line of duty—that he was “struck down in the heat of battle” while valiantly serving his country. Did the family and doctors kill the soldier, or did the enemy? In one **immediate sense**, the soldier finally died after being unplugged from various life-sustaining machines. Yet, most everyone would fairly and sensibly see the reality of the matter: a courageous soldier was killed in battle.

In a similar way (though not so courageously), the wicked King Saul was apparently mortally wounded by the Philistines. “The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded” (1 Samuel 31:3). He knew he was “done for.” The battle was lost to the Philistines, and he chose to inflict the final, fatal blow upon himself rather than waiting for what he knew was inevitable. In a more immediate, literal sense, did Saul kill himself? Yes. Is there also a general sense in which one might honestly say the Philistines killed Saul? Surely most fair-minded people would say so.

DID GOD KILL SAUL?

Many years later (between 500-450 B.C.),⁶ when the chronicler recorded his account of the events surrounding Saul's death, he also wrote about the Philistine archers who struck Saul (1 Chronicles 10:3), as well as Saul's subsequent decision to fall on his sword and die (10:4-5). However, the chronicler added the following: “So Saul died for his

unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; **therefore He killed him**, and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (10:13-14). Thus, the skeptics claim “contradiction” on this front as well. “How could God have killed Saul if Saul killed himself?”

In the same sense in which “the Lord set a king over” Israel (1 Samuel 12:13; cf. 10:24), the Lord “killed” Saul. Throughout Scripture, the Bible writers repeatedly testify to how God works and accomplishes things providentially (i.e., “God orchestrates His will through natural laws”).⁷ Did **Samuel** make Saul a king over Israel? Yes (1 Samuel 12:1). Did the Bible writer not also contend that **Israel** “made Saul king”? Yes (1 Samuel 11:15). Still, God “was behind” it all. He knew, and His inspired writers prophesied hundreds of years earlier, that Israel would have a king (Genesis 36:31; Deuteronomy 17:14-15). God worked this out “behind the scenes,” while using Samuel and the children of Israel to accomplish His will.

In like manner, God knew ahead of time (1) **that** He was going to punish Saul for his sins, and (2) **how** He was going to punish Saul. In fact, He informed Saul of such retribution through the prophet Samuel. The God-inspired prophet revealed to Saul, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23). What's more, God used the spirit of Samuel to speak to Saul from the realm of the dead. Exactly one day before Saul's death, God arranged for the departed soul of Samuel to speak to Saul a divinely inspired message, saying,

[T]he Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your

hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And **tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.** The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:17-19).

Did the Lord use the Philistines to kill Saul? Yes. Was **God** working providentially to arrange such warranted capital punishment? Absolutely. God knew **what** He was going to do, **how** He was going to do it, and **when** it would be accomplished. Indeed, as the chronicler recorded (1 Chronicles 10:13-14), there is a legitimate sense in which **God** justifiably killed Saul. Such Divine operation through various individuals and nations (such as the Philistines) is seen consistently throughout Scripture. The same God Who created the world with “the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6), and the same God Who is currently “upholding all things with the word of His power” (Hebrews 11:3), is the same God Who has worked and currently is orchestrating His will through natural laws. Anyone who is very familiar with the Bible should not be surprised to read truthful expressions such as “He [God] killed him [Saul],” even if God did not actually “pull the trigger.”

CONCLUSION

Answering the question, “Who killed King Saul?” provides Bible students with a golden opportunity to be reminded of three vital principles of interpretation. First, context is always critical to any correct understanding of any account or conversation. Part of getting “con-

text” is identifying “who is talking?” In the case of 2 Samuel 1, an uninspired Amalekite is alleging to have killed King Saul, and one should no more believe his claim than we should believe that Cain didn’t know where Abel was or Samson didn’t know from whence his strength came.

Second, remember that a “contradiction” is not a “contradiction” if words are used in different senses. In the case of “Who killed King Saul?” God, Saul, and the Philistines all truthfully “killed” him **in different senses.**

Third and finally, the Bible writers often harmoniously supplemented each other’s accounts. Reading **all** accounts gives the Bible student the best understanding of anything and everything the Bible teaches.⁸ Since the “sum” or “entirety” of God’s “word is truth” (Psalm 119:160), we should refrain from lazy, faulty, “partial” interpretations, and we should hunger for **all** of God’s Word, which when rightly divided, gives us the complete, truthful picture that God has painted for us.⁹

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dennis McKinsey (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 71.
- ² Steve Wells (2013), *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible* (SAB), p. 1610.
- ³ McKinsey, p. 71.
- ⁴ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (1906), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, www.studylight.org/lexicons/eng/hebrew/5221.html.
- ⁵ William Gesenius (1979 reprint), *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, <https://www.studylight.org/lexicons/eng/hebrew/5221.html>.
- ⁶ See Eric Lyons (2017), “A Flawed Assumption Many Make About Kings and Chronicles,” <https://apologeticspress.org/a-flawed-assumption-many-make-about-kings-and-chronicles-5421/>.
- ⁷ Kyle Butt (2016), “God’s Providence and the Problem of Evil,” <https://apologeticspress.org/gods-providence-and-the-problem-of-evil-5294/>.
- ⁸ Or any book for that matter. We best understand rulebooks, math books, biographies, etc. when we read them in their totality. Why would we not read the Bible in this same manner—and even more carefully and thoroughly if it is, in fact, the Word of God?
- ⁹ Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; cf. also Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19.

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Editor:

Dave Miller, M.A., M.Div., M.A.R., Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

Associate Editor:

Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*
(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

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NOTE FROM *The Editor*



New Book: *The Name "Christian" & Bible Inspiration*

One of the decisive proofs for the divine origin of the Bible is the prolific presence of predictive prophecy. Particularly impressive is the way God prompted numerous spokesmen to foreshadow New Testament events during the four millennia preceding Christ's arrival on Earth. Not only did the Old Testament prophets predict that Jesus would be born and then die an atoning death, they also anticipated the establishment of the Church of Christ. What's more, the 8th-century B.C. Messianic prophet Isaiah meticulously documented the fact that a "new name" would be given to the followers of Christ. This new name stands in stark contrast to the host of religious names and titles that mere humans have invented over the past 2,000 years. Nevertheless, God pre-planned in eternity to bestow upon the followers of Christ the name "Christian."

Apologetics Press has just released a new book that spotlights the Bible's uncanny use of predictive prophecy that authenticates its divine origin.

See Center Spread
for More Details



Only a divinely-inspired book could provide such specificity, accuracy, and uncanny anticipation.

This book is designed to be used in Bible classes as well as private study. 150 review questions/answers are included to facilitate those uses. Additionally, extensive endnotes, illustrative charts, and appendices are incorporated to further enhance comprehension of God's amazing truths.

Dave Miller