Shades of Creationism: Introduction

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[0:00] Why don't I open us up in prayer first? Father God, I thank you for this day. I thank you for this opportunity for us to think about you and to learn about you, Lord.

I ask that you give me clarity of mind and clear speech, and that this would be helpful and edifying to your body. We love you, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.
Okay, so let me start with a lot of preamble. So the preamble is, this is like a really huge subject. And when I was asked to give a class on it, initially I was like, okay, I'll do one tight class about it. And then I realized that's not going to work. I had to do more than one. And then the longer I was reading and looking, there's just no way for me to put everything that I would like to say into a class, unless we want to go all year.
[1:09] And so I had to focus on one specific thing. So I'll talk about what the goal of this class is in a second. But first, I'm Luke Batty.

I'm one of the deacons here at church. I'm also what would be called a natural theologian back in the day. And we'll get into that. But this is a little controversial.
I don't know if you guys have noticed, but there is sort of a discussion going on in Christian circles. And it has been for a long time.
And so what I hope to do in talking about creationism, intelligent design, theistic evolution, all these different topics, is to provide a framework for unity in the body.
I feel like a lot of times among Christians, when we want to be having useful, helpful discussions about these topics, you know, sort of like Bilbo hanging out and smoking a pipe and talking to Gandalf.
[2:25] We want to be doing that. But a lot of times it's more like that, right? We're kind of yelling at each other and we're just not connecting.

And so that's what I want to do. My goal here was to provide a couple tools to help us to understand each other, all the different positions that are there, and more generally talk about two sort of big picture philosophical positions that carry a lot of weight in this discussion.
So with that, let me go into what we're doing today, which is introduction.
I know everybody loves introductory classes, but I felt like there really wasn't any way for me to avoid it because to understand a lot of the tension and a lot of the rancor in the debate, we have to really understand how we got where we are right now.
So I wanted to give sort of a historical overview of the debate in Christianity, in science, and how science and faith sort of have been together and not together.
[3:45] And then we can go into this specific part of that debate, which is intelligent design and theistic evolution. So I'm going to apologize ahead of time for this PowerPoint.

It is probably the most boring PowerPoint I've ever made. But I promise next week it'll probably be as bad. So let's be honest.
Okay. So let's start with the rise of the scientific method. Now, believe it or not, the scientific method didn't actually pop out of the Enlightenment after those horrible dark ages.
But in fact, actually, the beginnings of the scientific method were actually developed in medieval Christian universities. And the way this developed is actually very interesting because if you go back to antiquity, when thinking about the natural world, especially if we're talking about ancient Greeks, for instance, they would actually do propositional thinking, which meant they would think about first principles and then using reason apply those first principles to nature and say this must be what's going on in nature.
Because their view of God and creator, the logos, is reason sort of imprinted on nature. And so you didn't have to go out and look at nature and, you know, observe.

[5:24] You just had to think about it and be like, okay, that's what's going on. And you didn't have to worry about it. But with the rise of Christianity, we had the rise of a free creator, a creator that was personal and that now he had a will.

And because God had will, that meant he could have done otherwise. He chose to create things a specific way. And so the only way that we can know what's going on in nature is to actually observe it, to go and look at it and say, this is what must be going on.
So empiricism, the view that we can look at nature and over testing and observation, we can learn something about the way that it works, develops from Christian theology of the nature of God as a free person.
And the other component of this sort of development is that God is rational and we are made in his image, which means that we can actually, we have reason to believe that we can go into nature and determine what's going on, that we can understand it.
I mean, it seems obvious to us now, but before Christianity, there was no feeling that nature could be intelligible to human beings, right?
[6:51] So with these two pillars, we have the will of God and we have intelligibility, we can now, as some of the early natural theologians, which was what they called scientists back in the day.

So I'm a scientist, if that wasn't clear from earlier on. These natural theologians sought to think God's thoughts after him and by learning about how God created the world to then glorify him and praise him for his amazing works, which is the impetus for a lot of the early scientific breakthroughs. But over time, this was formalized and systematized, institutionalized throughout the 17th and 19th century.
Earlier, you know, as the effort of science sort of progressed, we go from sort of medieval university professors sort of thinking about it.
It wasn't a huge, it wasn't like it exploded, right? But it started there. And over time, you had a growth of sort of independent scientists sort of doing their own thing, like, oh, hey, I was, you know, out in my mansion and I was looking in the backyard and I was like, hey, what about these peas, you know?
[8:15] So that moved on. And then over time, it became, there started to become philosophy of science where people were thinking about how we do science, what's best practices, what is the scientific method, how can we best challenge hypotheses and bring up evidence, et cetera.

And in the second half of the 19th century, science over time gets continuously narrowed and narrowed and narrowed down in its scope.
So in, oh, hold on, I skipped a thing. But at the end of the 19th century, that's when we have the narrowing of science into sort of the epistemological method outside of the supernatural, right?
So science now becomes this method to determine things outside of theology and philosophy. This is where we go out and we see what's in nature and we don't, we try not to bring any philosophy or theology into it.
And this is actually when this sort of assumption, and it's informal, it's not actually ever been formally inserted into the scientific method, but methodological naturalism is now assumed, right?
[9:41] And what methodological naturalism is, is the assumption that everything that we look at in nature has a natural explanation, right? So we do not appeal to agents.

We do not appeal to God. We just say, this must have happened because of this. And it's an endless sort of chain of causation. And this is methodological naturalism.
Now, at the same time, throughout this period, that science is becoming institutionalized, we also have the rise of a variety of new sort of disciplines and new discoveries from these disciplines.
So we have advances in geology, paleontology, biology. And the interesting thing about these advances is that while starting from a Christian foundation of understanding how we can understand nature, we started to discover things about nature that didn't really gel easily with the contemporary Christian worldview.
So, for instance, geology was moving away from what's called catastrophism and towards uniformitarianism. Basically, the idea that most of the geological formations that we see today are the result of the same sort of forces that we see every day on the street, but over long periods of time.
[11:10] So instead of there being catastrophic events that produce these geological formations, it's actually little tiny things over a long period of time.

And so this implicated that the Earth seemed to be very old. Also, paleontology started to unearth some pretty crazy things, you know?
Dinosaurs were showing up, you know? Like, what are these? We don't have these anymore. You know, all these strange and wonderful different created... Well, I guess I'm inserting my own worldview there, right?
But all these interesting new body plans and biological systems and new sort of creatures we had never seen before are being discovered, their bones are being discovered out of the Earth.
And so this sort of shakes the idea that the biological makeup of the Earth right now is permanent. Like, this is how it's always been.
[12:15] Apparently, this isn't always how it's been. There were things around that aren't around anymore. And then finally, most famously, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace were discovering mechanisms of adaptation and natural selection, which, in biology, which now posited the possibility that there were a continuum of animal forms just slowly morphing one into the other.

And so, as you can see, these new discoveries are sort of... They're poking. They're not very comfortable with the traditional Christian theistic worldview.
Suddenly, things are starting to look a little dissonant. And this is actually when we get the appearance of a new worldview.
And this new worldview is scientific materialism. So, cumulatively, all these different research areas started to allow the creation of a secular worldview.
Right? So now we have a universe that is... an Earth that is very old. We have creatures that have been dying. We have this new theory that allows us to explain how one animal can get into another animal in principle.
[13:54] And so this becomes scientific materialism. Now, what scientific materialism is is basically it marries two different philosophical positions.

The first one is familiar to all of us, which is materialism. What materialism says is that the world, the physical world, is all that there is.
Right? There is nothing but atoms and other kinds of atoms. And there's just a whole bunch of different atoms and different configurations.
And that's what we call the physical world. And that's all there is. Now, this was actually married to another view called scientism. And so what scientism is is that science alone...
Now, this is the hard version. There actually is a soft version, but I won't get into that unless somebody wants to ask a question about that, which, by the way, if you have any questions at all about anything, even in the middle of the class, please raise your hand.
[14:56] I wanted this to be clear. But scientism posits that the scientific method alone, especially in the hard sciences, is capable of explaining truth.

The only way to get at truth, the only way to get at verifiable information, knowledge, is through the scientific method. Now, you can see how these both sort of reinforce each other.
Right? Science, as I had said before, over the course of this period, had continuously narrowed and narrowed and narrowed into the point where we have this assumption of methodological naturalism, which says, we're not going to appeal to outside agents.
We're not going to appeal to God for anything. We're going to assume, for the sake of argument, let's say, in the case of Francis Bacon, he posited methodological naturalism as a thought exercise.
Right? I'm going to assume that there's nothing supernatural going on here. There's no design going on here. I'm just going to look at, well, I guess he wouldn't say there's no design, but I'm going to assume that a natural process is going on.
[16:09] So that, coupled with this new view that the material world is all there is, you can see that science is our method of getting verifiable information from the natural world.

and if the natural world is the only thing that exists, then science is the only thing that can give us any real information about it. So this is how we get to the point where there is an open hostility between sort of institutionalized science and theistic worldview.
Right? So we have these early sort of discoveries which are uncomfortable with the contemporary theistic worldview, but not insurmountable.
But this new secular comprehensive worldview is very much uncompatible with Christianity. And this is how the scientific establishment, you might say, you know, becomes hostile to religious belief in general.

And this institutionalization has been one of the major drivers of most of the philosophical and metaphysical trends that we see in our culture.
[17:38] You know, modernism, postmodernism, they're all as a baseline assuming scientific materialism in many ways. and they rely on the authority and the track record of scientific discoveries to sort of prop up that philosophical worldview.

And that's one of the things that we're going to talk about in this class is that a lot of the perceived hostility between science and specifically the Christian worldview is actually a philosophical disagreement.
Where we, as Christians, reject scientific materialism, obviously, right? Because there's at least one thing that is not material and that's God, right?
And so we have to reject that and because this has sort of been this philosophy has sort of been interwoven with the way that we do science and the assumptions that we make, this creates a lot of tension in our world.
So this leads us to the Christian bind. So if you're thinking about the development of the scientific method over time, then we're going to be looking at the fact that Christianity at a base level has the assumptions that brought science into the fore, right?
[19:10] we started off talking about how the theology of God as a independent person with a free will and our status as image bearers is what cumulatively sets up the system for science.

but over time this has become more difficult and so the Christian bind is that we acknowledge wholeheartedly that men can understand the physical world and learn something true about God and nature.
We're made in the image of God and this is what allows us to confidently come to nature and say we can learn something.
But secondly the world view of scientific materialism which has been supported by the findings of this method are clearly contrary to scripture.
Scientific materialism doesn't mesh with scripture and so Christians are seemingly stuck between what I call truth lowercase t truth being what we can know about general revelation revelation what we can learn about the world nature you know in the bible Paul tells us that God is clearly seen in the works of nature so this is the basis of what we would call general revelation but we also have a capital T truth right which is scripture God's actual revelation to us specially and this special revelation has its own truth claims right and so when scientific materialism based on lowercase t truth and Christianity based on uppercase t truth come into conflict Christianity Christians feel like right because we want to affirm that we can learn something from nature but we also want to affirm the truth of scripture and so historically this actually developed this bind sort of developed sort of a split in at least in
[21:34] American Christianity between what we would call the fundamentalist movement these were Christians that above all wanted to protect the truth of special revelation and as a result they stayed what we would call theologically orthodox but they actually became intellectually sort of isolationist they stayed true to scripture but they no longer wanted to work with or interact with that's the word I'm looking for they no longer wanted to interact with the scientific establishment or many other forms of intellectual pursuit because they thought that it was all sort of corrupted but on the other side we had a different group of Christians who tended to side more with general revelation than with special revelation and these became what we would call the liberal mainline denominations that we have today and they became less and less orthodox over time due to a greater and greater desire to fit sort of this new materialist intellectual milieu into

Christianity to the point where a lot of times they will deny the deity or even existence of Christ they will deny the resurrection often they will reinterpret the gospel and maybe even reject theism itself so I guess what I'm trying to explain to us as we approach this topic is because a lot of the emotion right a lot of the anger in this topic is because we have groups of Christians who guard jealously special revelation right because historically we've had situations in which Christians have slowly disregarded the authority of special revelation and fallen away right but then at the other end of the spectrum we have
Christians saying but we have every reason biblically to believe that we as image bearers have a responsibility and an ability to know about the natural world and so there is this tension right and a lot of it has to do with our historical situation as we are right now evangelicals which broadly we are right evangelicals didn't really ever fit neatly in the fundamentalist category or the mainline category

so in a certain sense we are like hey man let's all be together but at the same time we can't help but be influenced by the major big streams of Christianity going through our culture and so if this is the origin of this view of the scientific versus science versus faith dichotomy this is something that we need to look at how do we balance general revelation and special revelation how do different people different
Christians come to different conclusions about how we do that and that is going to be the topic of our next class is the different ways of balancing general and special revelation and the different ways in which this influences how we understand scripture and the natural world okay this is the most boring slide but also the rest are equally boring so let's move on to what we're going to be talking about more specifically in this wider science versus faith debate which is intelligent design and theistic evolution so today I'm not going to go into a whole bunch of details about what intelligent design what are the arguments what are the arguments against that's going to be our third class where we're going to talk about a different sort of balance but I want to start off with a definition right
I want us to all be on the same page about what it is that we're talking about so we don't get confused so what is the intelligent design movement well if we take them at their own word which I think is the intellectually honest thing to do intelligent design is primarily a scientific movement or ID I'm going to call them ID because that's how they go they have a variety of minor sort of philosophical metaphysical arguments associated but what ID really seeks to argue is that many elements of nature are best explained through the activity of an intelligent agent they try to argue that design is scientifically detectable specifically in the biological realm and so the challenge to intelligent design often is actually that they are pseudoscientific right and pseudoscientific is a way of arguing that their methodology methodology is not in line with the scientific method okay let me let me go a little bit into that so we can understand that criticism before we move on to criticism of their arguments on the merits of their arguments this is the challenge of pseudoscience is sort of a dismissal and basically their critics argue that you can't appeal to an agent when doing science that this now puts you outside of the scientific method but as we talked about earlier that doesn't necessarily need to be the case right you'll find that most of the time when scientists are dismissing the intelligent design movement on this basis they're actually arguing implicitly for methodological naturalism right now interestingly if you actually look at the various explanations and demarcations of what the scientific method is you won't actually find methodological naturalism it is not a expressed tenet of the scientific method right so a lot of times because the ID crowd rejects methodological naturalism right because their argument is that we can actually see the activity of God in nature now of course they don't make well I'll explain that what they aren't but this sort of tension between methodological naturalism and the
[29:08] ID crowd is really what I think is at the root of this challenge of pseudoscience now the problem is because methodological naturalism isn't a core tenet of the scientific method they actually can't argue for it so often times they will argue that the ID community doesn't present falsifiable claims or that it's an argument from ignorance or doesn't make predictions these are all different tenets of the scientific method but I don't think most of those challenges actually pass muster I think most of the time they are confronted critics of intelligent design are confronted with the fact that they are expressing rejecting methodological naturalism and being brought to the fore and they are like oh man I can't actually argue the problem is with scientific materialism is that scientism one of those pillars that the hard sciences are the only way to get true knowledge is not is a self-refuting statement right so that the sentence science is the only way to get true knowledge is not testable by science you see the problem and so because that sentence is not testable by science it cannot be true by its own argument right and so a lot of times when the

ID crowd brings up their arguments methodological naturalism starts to come to the fore and then scientists are like well I can't argue for methodological naturalism because that's a philosophical argument and based on scientific materialism I can't argue for that so they're putting a bind I think it's an uncomfortable position and I don't mean to dismiss the critics of intelligent design because there are legitimate criticisms of the different claims on scientific grounds on philosophical grounds I think what I want to say is I'm not going to really focus primarily in this class on the challenge that it's pseudoscientific I think it's not really worth our time and I think it's not worth our time because it doesn't really work so that is what intelligent design is what isn't it okay it is not a religious movement so

ID proponents don't make arguments from scripture they don't they're not expressly Christian they're not even all theists to be honest with you there are agnostics part of the ID crowd there are Muslims there are what's up I'm sorry say yeah yeah I mean there's there's just a whole bunch there's like neoplatonists as part of it you know so there's like a whole it's a hodgepodge so I think to argue that it is sort of a creationist group is not necessarily true although the implications of intelligent design really point to the fact that there is some sort of intelligent agent so you know they would argue that when they're given the charge of creationism that they would say well it doesn't have to be God it could be you know like a super advanced alien right that's doing it but really when we're

I mean when we're talking about the kinds of things that the ID movement is saying has been done in the history of biology it looks a lot like God so I understand the sentiment but we want to understand what the movement is on its own grounds right they would never argue from scripture and they would never argue from theology either now individual ID proponents will say yes but I also am a Christian and so to Christians they will talk about theology and stuff but not as a major part of their scientific work so they do take great pains to separate theological arguments from their scientific case they don't make interpretations of Genesis although if you were to take a poll you would find that most Christians who are in the ID movement would be called old earth creationists is the general field and they're not dedicated to any specific designer it could be anything that has the power and capacity to design which in our situation let's call this guy

God so that's intelligent design again I'm happy to take any questions after the lesson or during the lesson but my goal here in this class is to try to present what the arguments is that each side is actually presenting for themselves and not caricature them so that is what we're doing today is trying not to caricature each side so what is theistic evolution so theistic evolution as you might imagine has something to do with evolution and something to do with God as well so what theistic evolution is it is a movement or actually I shouldn't say movement it is a theological slash philosophical position so they don't really make specific scientific claims what they do is they argue that the

[35:23] Darwinian macro evolution is compatible with theistic belief that's the through line in all of the different sort of groups within what could be called theistic evolution because the problem is unlike ID which is a specific thing you know it's ID trademark there are groups saying like we are part of the intelligent design movement they have institutions etc theistic evolution isn't like that it's not a group you know it's not like there isn't the theistic evolution center right it's a position it's a philosophical position and what that means is that there's like a huge super broad category of different views that could be identified as theistic evolutionary right so and depending on where you are on that spectrum within theistic evolution you're going to get very different interpretations different ways that this is going to play out in in your arguments so just to give you a small taste of the different forms of theistic evolutionary thought you have people who argue that for something that could be called evolutionary design right you could have a group that argues for evolutionary creation which is that that that is associated with the biologos consortium evolutionary creation tends to disagree with the evolutionary design arguments and I'll explain that in a second you also have theistic evolutionists to hold a deistic worldview about the fact that

God set the clock and walked away and that's all there is to it right so I mean these are primarily descriptors that I'm presenting one of the difficulties with a philosophical position is that a lot of times they don't really define their terms correctly or differentiate themselves from other groups so I'm trying to bring clarity yeah yeah sorry so this is sort of a term primarily used by Christians and it's to differentiate the different kinds of evolution evolutionary theory so Darwinian indicates that the mechanism by which the evolution occurs the transition of species into other species into different animal forms the method by which or the mechanism by which that happens is natural selection and adaptation well neo-Darwinism would say there's also the component of genetic mutations is part of that genetic mutations on top of natural selection basically random changes in the genome are then sort of weeded out by nature itself right so if you have a random genetic variation that makes you better slightly better at digesting a nut and you're in this environment that has like a whole bunch of these different nuts then you're going to be better fed than the other members of the population and then that means you will out compete them in terms of breeding etc and over time that genetic marker essentially becomes dominant and this happens over and over and over again and over time these small changes make big changes so that's what the macro in the macro evolution is

talking about macro evolution is talking about the common ancestry of all biological forms starting from single celled all the way through there's a branch of ancestry going through that we're all connected through this
Darwinian mechanism now scientists don't use the word macro evolution scientists would just say evolution right we in the Christian community often use the term macro evolution to differentiate the big sort of world view picture of Darwinism from micro evolution which is again another Christian mostly a Christian term which is talking about how that mechanism works in small scale and discrete places that we can actually see so basically nobody argues that micro evolution doesn't happen and what micro evolution is is what I just described that you have a mutation you know it makes the bird better at eating a nut and the bird proliferates and that genetic marker is expanded that is micro evolution something we can test in nature and that's what really the pioneering thought of
Charles Darwin was this idea that adaptation and natural selection can make these changes that can explain these morphological changes and what Christians often argue is that micro evolution is true but you can't extrapolate the micro evolution into the past to make the big worldview picture that we call micro evolution but scientists would just call everything evolution right so so the reason I use that term here is because if I were to say theistic evolutionists argue that evolution is compatible with theistic belief it's too broad because most creationists almost all stripe would argue that some evolution is compatible with theistic belief in fact I would say almost everybody says that some form of evolution the argument is what kind of evolution what shape does it take and what's interesting about theistic evolution what sets it apart is they argue that this specific
Darwinian macro evolutionary model is compatible with theistic belief and that argument has its own discrete tensions with Christianity specifically you know this descent of man is one of the big sticking points there another problem that many people have is with animal death before the fall what does that look like how old is the earth Darwinian macro evolution assumes a very old earth has to otherwise it doesn't work and so if you are a young earth creationist then you're going to be like that doesn't work right so this is sort of a term of art that I'm using and I'm glad that you asked me to explain it because I'm in this stuff so much that I just what's jargon and what isn't it just kind of flies over my head so basically what differentiates the different sort of views within theistic evolution is to what extent we can say that evolution is directed so if you're somebody who argues for an evolutionary design argument then you would be more comfortable saying that
[43:04] God set up this evolutionary paradigm to create a specific end he had this end the world right now well the world pre-fall let's say but the world that resulted pre-fall that was God's intention and through providence God created that we can say God created that even though mechanistically there's this natural system producing it now an evolutionary creationist sort of on the biologus form would be a little less comfortable with that they wouldn't be so comfortable saying that God specifically meant for this particular creation at the end just that God used evolution to create something like this and then if you go all the way other to the other end of the spectrum on the deistic side now sorry I should be clear biologus is also its own big spectrum of different beliefs I'm just trying to paint with a broad brush if you're on the way other end of the deistic view

God didn't really even care what came out right he's just like I'm creating and look oh man this mechanism look at that it's creating stuff so and then maybe that's a caricature but there are not many Christians who would argue for that deistic worldview in some sense God is directing the evolutionary framework so let's talk about what theistic evolution is not it's not a scientific movement they very rarely make scientific arguments they don't make predictions they don't argue for they don't produce their own well I mean if they're scientists they may produce their own research but not as an effort of theistic evolution and this makes sense to us right because the tenet is that the scientific consensus on evolutionary theory is true so they're not going to make scientific arguments for theistic evolution they're saying their argument is we don't have to worry about it right we don't have to worry about the scientific evidence and so theistic evolutionists will often disagree with sort of mainstream scientists on their philosophical presuppositions right and their big worldview but they don't argue against usually the science that's produced by this institution and this often ends up you know the problem you know
I feel bad for the theistic evolution community because they get a lot of flack from sort of Christians creationist Christians right but then also they don't get a lot of respect from the scientific community either you know the scientific community says you guys are just adding you know this this you know

sky the sky guy to our movement and we don't I mean this in our theory we don't need it so I feel bad they get hit all over the place so they don't they rarely actually even argue from a scientific position now often times they'll argue maybe with a critic of evolution right they'll argue for sort of the mainstream consensus scientific position on it but that's really not the thrust of their argument the thrust of their argument is that we can live in harmony theistic
I mean evolution can be in harmony with the Christian worldview or theism in general I should say so the scientific arguments are usually tertiary so when we're talking about intelligent design versus theistic evolution because there has been quite a bit of argumentation between these two different groups you can see why a lot of times they don't really get anywhere and the problem is and this is something that people in both camps would acknowledge the problem is they are different movements trying to do different things and they have different philosophical positions that that's usually not where the argumentation is happening right so if you're an intelligent design proponent you're going to be arguing scientifically that you know XYZ scientific argument is invalid the theistic evolutionist doesn't want to deal with that they're like I don't want to even deal with that
I want to deal with why you think that's a problem right and so usually these discussions go round and round in circles and so what I want to do in this class for the third class is discuss what is one of those major philosophical disagreements that each side has that determines their openness to these different views right why would somebody be more convinced by an intelligent design argument from science than they would be from a theistic evolution perspective what theological argument are they making so that is what I want to talk about in this class there are a lot of things I could talk about there are a lot of things that I would like to talk about but I felt like if my goal in the course is to provide tools for this church specifically to have cordial and beneficial discussions with each other on these issues without it becoming superheated you know things get heated sometimes but superheated is I want to give hopefully some tools to understand the other person's position so you can argue at that plane or on other planes but with that in mind so we don't get too confused and angry so what are the two tensions these are going to be the topics of my next two classes the first tension is general versus special revelation
[49:13] I already talked about this how do we balance these two basically this class is going to be why are we even talking about this why even talk about intelligent design and theistic evolution right the bible tells us everything we need to know right or does it or should we think it does that is what this class is going to be about my next class the class after that the final one is going to be talking about how we balance how we understand God's activity in the world is God primarily acting in the world in creation through his primary agent I use primary way too many times in that sentence does God usually is God working in creation through primary causation meaning is he doing something like we as we would think of an engineer is he creating the parts and is he putting them together as the analogy would go is that is he working primarily that way like an artist or is he creating in secondary causation sort of in a sovereign providential way is he creating a system that can create other other ends and by providence by secondary causation we can say God created right that is the central tension

I think between intelligent design and theistic evolution is what should we expect God's activity in the world to look like and based on that what what what is a compelling argument from either from either side of that so with that I will end the class and take any questions my goal is hopefully to expand our our minds so that we can we can better discuss things because this is a really fun discussion and it should be fun it should be less angry that's the first time I've heard anyone describe this as fun within the church so the clarity is helpful and the history and the background is helpful yeah I mean I should say that I'm not a historian even though I like to think of myself as one I there are many ways to discuss the fundamentalist modernist discussion I was trying to focus primarily on the changes in the scientific community but we can talk about philosophical disagreements metaphysical stuff theological stuff that I would very much not be qualified to talk about at all I'm barely qualified to talk about this so but yes I was hoping that it would sort of provide a place for that Tyler could you describe the hermeneutical tension that exists within these two camps we're in hermeneutics in interpreting Genesis where does the rubber hit the road and how they understand what Genesis is teaching yes so that is mostly what next class is going to be about but because I like you so much I know generally so the rubber hits the road when it comes to what you believe the purpose of

Genesis is what is Genesis trying to convey right and what I'll talk about next week is the basic argument that the literal interpretation of a biblical passage is not necessarily by definition the correct interpretation right often it is but sometimes it's not and how can we understand that in relationship to Genesis right and Christians come down on so many different sides on this and that's what I hope to overview next week is how we come down on different sides of this but at the end of the day it comes down to what is Genesis trying to convey and there are positions that I would say that is not allowed right and I'll talk about that next week but there is
I feel like there's a lot of room there for discussion the difficulty is how do you look at it with clear eyes and absent the tension that we're talking about right because if you think about what the correct interpretation of Genesis is has nothing to do with our disagreements with scientific materialism and our attempts to understand what the facts on the ground are right Genesis has its own message to tell us and sometimes it's hard to separate those two and but that's you know that's the way I think it should be done so we'll talk about that next week but yeah any other questions clarifying questions you can ask another question if you want
[54:52] Beth oh real quick so Francis Collins the human genome project yep where does he fall in the in the is he intelligent design or is he a theistic evolutionist or is he so he is definitely a theistic evolutionist he is the founder of the BioLogos group so he he wrote a book I believe called the language of God if I'm not mistaken and in that he makes the argument for theistic evolution and that is what or what he would call evolutionary creation because it has its own like I was trying to explain in the broad scheme of things it has its own arguments so yeah he's definitely a theistic evolutionist yeah can you tell us a little bit about what you do and what your work is and also about the interplay of your faith with that oh sure yeah so I am a scientist what I do is

I guess technically science most of the time I make bunches of mistakes so I work in a field called tissue engineering in this field what we do is we take biological cells and we're trying to apply them to three dimensional synthetic scaffolds to create a therapeutic so in my sorry I touched the microphone rule number one don't touch the microphone so in my lab that means we create biodegradable tubes we seed smooth muscle cells on them to create an artificial vessel for people for instance who have had coronary artery disease or other vascular diseases so that's what I work on I actually more specifically work on sort of the large animal testing of that how can we test these in large animals before we test them in humans to make sure that they're safe but yeah generally that's what I work on although my background is in biochemistry so at the graduate level it is a little fuzzy what I do
I'm technically in pathology because I work on diseases but I don't really do pathology it's very confusing I'll get a degree in pathology I don't know what that'll do for me but yeah so I'm a biochemist who works on cells basically is what I would say and how does that work with my faith that's an interesting question I was homeschooled growing up me and my eight other siblings were all homeschooled and my mom was the daughter of a medical doctor and from the time that she was young she loved science all the way through she was an artist but she wanted to actually what she was in college for was to do the medical illustrations so if you go into an anatomy textbook and you see the picture of the heart that's what she wanted to do and she was doing that before she got married and had a billion kids so she really loves science she really loved learning loved she's still alive she's coming tomorrow to my house so don't worry about that but she loved science and so from an early age we just were sort of saturated in this culture of loving science you know ironically I would say if I had to look back and place myself sort of in a tradition I would say I grew up in a fundamentalist household but we didn't really ever see a problem with that and the love of science so anyways that's where I I've come from my oldest brother is a biochemist my next oldest brother has a degree in chemical engineering my next oldest brother is a nurse I'm next I'm whatever I am and then my younger brother is a biochemist so there's a lot of scientists in my family which is great I mean you know it's a testament to my mom and her love of it neither of my parents had any college degrees but education and science were very important to them and then theologically we were doing a bunch of apologetics so that sort of helped in any of the places where I would normally if you hear the back story of the person who's into science but they were like oh man Christianity apologetics really helps with a lot of the dissonance that you would normally feel just to know that there are people out there who acknowledge you know who are willing to acknowledge the scientific information and don't see a problem with that with Christianity it's really a confidence building thing and I would suggest that everybody do that with their kids get them into apologetics

it'll help them yeah thanks for that any other questions yeah Amos lay it on me he's the real scientist in the room I don't he actually does real stuff not a scientist anymore no my question is evolution is kind of tricky to discuss because you know getting into like kind of the facts is hard yeah but physics [60:45] I've found to be a little bit simpler in some ways yeah and it makes some you know the physicists make some pretty concrete claims like specifically age of the universe yeah so like in one hand biology is messy any biologist would disagree with that yeah physics is a little bit cleaner yeah in that sense but it seems like the discussions tend to focus on biology and evolution and yeah but it seems like the first quite like in order to assess micro versus macro the first thing you have to do is decide how old you think because obviously small changes can add up to big changes right yeah of course very definition of you know that's a mathematical statement right so the first thing you have to do is decide how many years has evolution has micro evolution which everybody agrees with how many years has micro evolution had a chance to operate yeah before you start even deciding what could or could not have happened or you know where you know where the where you draw the line between micro which everybody agrees with and macro which if you're using the phrase you're maybe saying that you don't agree with right right yeah you're using that phrase to outline the category of things exactly yeah so there's kind of like a how do I say it what's my question where why is it that people or do people tend to talk more about evolution more so than physics or yeah I think it depends on your your area

I find that philosophers professional philosophers like William Lane Craig Alvin Plantinga these guys really didn't really like to talk about biology at all you know they wanted to talk about physics because like you said it's very clear you know William Lane Craig is famous for his his reworking of the cosmological argument Alvin Plantinga has his own set of philosophical arguments like the contingency argument but the philosophers I've found are more comfortable talking about the evidence for God in physics and actually I would I should say that intelligent design people and theistic evolutionists both agree on arguments such as the fine tuning argument of physics they are they agree on mostly on the cosmological arguments for God they would agree on the contingency arguments so

I think sometimes the reason that biology is in the forefront from a lot of these discussions is that there's less agreement there is more agreement on the physics side of things but I understand what your argument is which is I would say that for when it comes to the age of the earth there are a variety of different streams of evidence that seem to indicate an age an old earth right now young earth creationists would either dispute each of these different lines of evidence on their own terms or they would argue in general of they would make a philosophical argument about what the capabilities of science are to discuss the earth but you're right the thing is if you're a young earth creationist evolution is impossible right because the age of the universe precludes that possibility so you're right one of the reasons

I wanted to do the next class which is on the balance between general and special revelation is because in this class in a lot of ways it's sort of excluding a lot of young earth creationists because they would just say why why are we even talking about it right because it's impossible what what I want to bring them into the discussion and explain where they come from where other positions are coming from and if you think about it if intelligent design is the argument that we can see the detectable evidence of design in nature you would expect a young earth creationist to be like obviously right because nature animals human beings all of nature was specially created in a miracle right and so they would they are all from what

I understand almost all young earth creationists are ID proponents but they at the same time would say well a lot of those ID guys they're older creationists you know they don't they don't really know what's going on but their arguments about science are good right and so yeah the problem is because of all these overlapping arguments because really the age of the earth is sort of a backdrop in which the scientific discussion of biology is happening right and so for me to do a class on intelligent design versus theistic evolution I have to sort of I want to acknowledge the backdrop but I have to sort of move in to the specific arguments of biology so yeah it's a tough picture you know and I think there are if one of the reasons why

[66:42] I felt inadequate doing this class is because I could do a whole class just on young earth creationism and their various arguments for the age of the universe age of the earth their biblical arguments I want to touch a little bit on that next week but I'm not going to do them justice and I feel you know I want to make sure that they know that I know that there are people who do them justice

right whether or not we agree with them right you mentioned the your gratitude for apologetics but I wanted to kind of talk about that a little because I remember a lot of my youth group apologetics classes being more of a sword to use against arguments so it would be my thought is that they ultimately failed me is kind of what I was going to get at and my thought is going through this is seeing that it seems like it was one of a couple things that broke down was that it was either philosophical arguments being put forward as scientific arguments or to defeat scientific arguments on the opposing side or cherry picking examples for example giraffes have these special mechanisms in their necks so that their brains don't explode when they bend over how would that evolve maybe that's worth something but then you put that forward there's always someone who's going to be able to come back at you with three more arguments that you don't have an answer for so my question is how can you spot good apologetics versus bad apologetics that is a great question

I think the usefulness of apologetics is primarily in its philosophical training many many apologists will spend the majority of their time teaching you basic philosophy to understand where for instance fallacies are coming from where yeah so basically so for instance when I was talking about earlier how scientific materialism or scientism is a self refuting argument that is where apologetics is useful right where you can see common objections common arguments that are really weak right now when it comes to specific arguments I'm not necessarily sure I would call a scientific argument about the nature of a giraffe's neck as apologetics necessarily right because what apologetics is is the defense of the faith and if you marry the idea that you need to be able to explain why evolution is impossible for your faith to be real is really shaky ground right that led to a lot of deconstruction among my friends and even a period of questioning for myself it's like we make all these absolute claims about our faith and worldview that are all dominoes that hinge on each other and so you take one out and everything falls to pieces yeah I think the benefit what I would say if I was counseling somebody in this position which really you don't want me as a counselor don't ask me to be your counselor but if I was in this position
I would say listen to a diverse view of apologetics because you're going to find orthodox Christians in apologetics who disagree with the giraffe argument right so I would say it's not so much a problem with apologetics as a field as it is a problem with creating a bubble for yourself whether that be a young earth bubble or an old earth bubble or any other bubble because I think you'll find that once you puncture that and you go into anybody else's bubble you're going to find that people are a lot more reasonable than you thought they were right and you can't caricature their arguments anymore and especially within the Christian community where again we want to have helpful discussions without rancor we want to be able to understand where our fellow Christians are coming from in their world view and so having a diverse view so for instance you know I was exposed to young earth apologetics old earth theistic less theistic evolutionists but a little bit of that I mean so I had a variety of views where I could you sort of get a big picture over time seeing okay here's a strength here's a weakness and how can I best balance all of these different views like where would I really feel confident arguing so for instance you know I would feel very confident arguing for the cosmological argument right you know the Kalam cosmological argument I think is very strong I know that there are critiques of it but I find the critiques to be pretty weak and they seem very ad hoc is what I'm saying so there are really strong arguments that you can make and then there are arguments that you hold tentatively right and then you say you know so I guess when it comes down to it build your foundation with the strong stuff don't build your foundation with the weak stuff and then what the process of growing and learning wisdom is being able to differentiate the strong and weak you know yeah Amos last question lay it on me
I wanted to jump off of that to mention something that I was thinking during an earlier slide which was Galileo and the church took a very strong stance against the sun being the center of the solar system and it seemed to me like I'm no historian I don't know any of this stuff but it certainly seemed to me like the scientific field reacted pretty strongly to that position such that once the church was demonstrated to be wrong about it then at that point it kind of opened the flood gate to well look the church can make really strong arguments and off of nothing yeah I think that's kind of like your apologetics thing like be careful what arguments you make and say and stand on them strongly because if you're overstating yourself then if you're overstating yourself then that's a big problem if you're wrong exactly

[73:40] I think it comes down to our Christian witness right but I would say we all have blind spots and what you think is a strong argument or a weak argument is going to be different from another person who's looking at it a different way and I think what the benefit of cordial discussion and brotherly pushback on your arguments and just general intellectual training is so that we can sharpen each other iron sharpens iron and knowing that every time I hear a good criticism of one of the arguments I like a little part of me is like oh no but growing up you've got to learn how to deal with those little oh no's and then remind yourself what's really the foundation of what I believe and can I let this go is this criticism even really very good etc so yeah

I think one of the last thing I'll say is one of the problems with the Galileo incident is you know you have the Catholic churches and ecclesiology believes in the authority of tradition and that creates a lot of issues when you have a church that's 2,000 years old right so revisions of ideas are very difficult in that situation and it's different in the Protestant world right where we have sola scriptura so we're pretty open about non-scriptural things in general right all right well thank you guys thanks for coming next week hermeneutics everybody's favorite topic not you you you you you you you you