

## WHICH CAME FIRST—THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

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Simple; the chicken came first. For centuries, maybe even millennia, this question has plagued people. It has become a standing joke—a cliché often applied to humanity’s ignorance of proper order. Yet the answer is quite straightforward for those with an understanding of God’s Word. It is not some kind of mystery to be solved only by time or by science (if at all). That answer, “the chicken” (or more appropriately, the adult bird), is based on a sound biblical principle referred to as the **doctrine of mature creation**.

In essence, this doctrine states that when God made “heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11), they were made perfect, complete, and ready for habitation by mankind and the multiplication of all life. One of the ways this idea can be understood is to examine the miracles of Jesus Christ during His ministry on Earth.

During the Savior’s first miracle at Cana, as recorded in the second chapter of John, He transformed approximately 150 gallons of water into wine. It would take a relatively long time for mere mortals to accomplish a similar feat using natural resources. They would need not only water, but also soil, sunshine, and time for grapes to form on the vine. These grapes then would have to be cultivated, harvested, crushed, and strained before pouring into storage jars. When the governor of the wedding feast tasted the contents of the containers, he found not just wine, but “good wine” (John 2:10). Under normal conditions, both proper physical conditions and the skill of the grape growers would be necessary to achieve such a superlative product. Yet Jesus accomplished this great task in an instant. Something only minutes old had the taste that usually would have taken many days to produce.

A superficial “appearance of age” also can be seen in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand recorded in John 6:9-14. Thousands of loaves were distributed for which the barley had not been sown, harvested, or milled, and that never had been mixed into dough and baked in an oven. Equally amazing, thousands of dried fishes were handed out, which neither had grown from an egg nor been caught in a fisherman’s net. Everything was there in a prepared form, ready to eat by the recipients of this great wonder.

The miracle of creation also was achieved in a relative instant, producing an effect that could have only a supernatural cause. In the first chapter of Genesis, God created trees and grasses—not just their seeds. He created birds that could fly already—not eggs or even chicks. He created fish that could swim—not fish eggs. He created cattle—not calves. And He created man and woman—not boy and girl. Speaking to these animals, and to these people, God commanded: “Be fruitful and multiply” (1:22,28). Notice that the plants and animals began to multiply straightaway, according to their own kind (1:11,24). Immature organisms could not have reproduced, and in any case would have perished in the absence of their adult forms. So Adam, for example, had the look and the capability of a full-grown adult male on the first Sabbath, even though he had lived only one day. Thus, according to the doctrine of mature creation, all living things were created in a mature state, with only the **appearance** of age.

How does this doctrine apply to the age of the Earth or the age of the Universe? For example, when evolutionists proclaim that the world is 4.6 billion years old, rather than several thousand years old as the Bible teaches, can Christians respond with “God just made it look that old?” Although tantalizingly simple, such a retort could represent an unintentional misuse of the principle. The methods evolutionists use to obtain their incredible ages are based on faulty reasoning and self-deception. Thus, it is dangerous to justify such a falsehood by applying a scriptural truth. Some also have tried to explain the occurrence of coal and oil by the doctrine of mature creation. Once again, such reasoning rests on an evolutionary assumption—i.e., that coal and oil take eons to form. The implication is, therefore, that if these fuels have the appearance of tremendous age, then

God “just created” them in the Earth fully formed so that humankind would have a source of energy. However, there is abundant evidence to indicate that coal, oil, and other remains of early life (i.e., fossils) can be explained quite adequately in terms of a young Earth. Further, the existence of coal and oil virtually requires the rapid, catastrophic events of the worldwide Flood described in Genesis 6-9. Thus, the issue of “apparent age” is irrelevant in these examples.

One case where the mature creation principle may apply is the supposed problem of starlight. The following question often is asked: “If the creation week happened only several thousand years ago, how can the creationist explain light coming from stars that are millions of light-years away?” This is not an unreasonable inquiry, although the solution is not easy or complete. Light travels at rate of approximately 186,000 miles per second. The distance light traverses in a year is called, not surprisingly, a light-year. Recently, astronomers have found objects 15 billion light-years away from Earth. This means, according to evolutionary theories, that the light from these stars would have begun its journey to Earth more than 10 billion years before this planet came into existence. How can the Christian respond to these claims?

A partial answer may be found in the principle of apparent age. On the fourth day of His creative activity, God placed luminary bodies in the Universe that would serve “for signs and for seasons, for days and for years” (Genesis 1:14). Hence, the initial starlight was created in place, ready for its intended purpose. Without the mature creation of such starlight, the early night sky would lack patterns suitable for the needs specified in verse 14. But what has happened to starlight since the creation? When astronomers observe fluctuations in the brightness of a star, or a supernova coming into existence, they are witnessing real phenomena. This is to be expected, because the Universe usually operates with consistency and uniformity according to scientific laws established by God during the creation. However, on special occasions in the past, supernatural forces have been exercised that, for a brief time, upset the normal operation of nature. Thus, the calamitous events of the first sin (Genesis 3) and the Flood may have affected light in some unpredictable way, just as they distressed the whole of creation (Romans 8:20-22).

It is important to understand that man does not live in an entirely “God just did it” Universe. Fossils were not “just put there” by God to “trick” modern man or to “test his faith.” Similarly, starlight does not contain arbitrary changes “just created” by God to “fool” humans into seeing imaginary incidents in the history of the Universe. Tactics of confusion and deception hardly belong to a Creator Who would have humanity discern Him by His creation (Romans 1:20). The doctrine of mature creation can help Christians come to a better knowledge of God and His Word, and thus make them better prepared to “give an answer” to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15).

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