

Death Before the Fall of Man
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Young-earth creationists have long argued against the occurrence of death before the fall of man. This mistaken doctrine stems from two verses in the Bible. The first is Genesis 1:29-30, which states, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, where-in there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so."

Yes, the Bible says that God gave the green plants to all animals to eat. However, nowhere does the Bible say that animals "cannot" eat meat...it only says they were given grass to eat. In other words, they were not prohibited by God from eating meat.

Also, nowhere does the Bible claim that there was no physical death before sin...it is inferred from the Genesis text and this verse, Romans 5:12, which states, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Why many theologians have interpreted this to mean "all" death, including physical death, is unclear, as there is no theological reason for it to infer physical death, when you consider the context of the passages in Genesis.

In Genesis, it is obvious that the passage means spiritual death, not physical. Here's a simple logical answer...when Adam ate the apple, he entered into spiritual death...he did not physically die when he bit the apple. We know this because he had children with Eve after he ate the apple. Adam did not introduce physical death, but spiritual death. In fact, if you read Satan's dialogue with Eve, then you will see the answer plain as day. He told Eve she would not die, but all the while Satan knew that he would be introducing spiritual death to the world. How else was Satan to prevent people from following God...killing them physically did not end their spiritual relationship with God. By introducing spiritual death, Satan knew he could prevent people from worshiping God.

Ecosystem

Apparently, young-earth scientists are a little weak when it comes to understanding the ecosystem and the food chain. God designed nature to be self-renewing. As creatures die, their remains decompose, and nourish the plants. As the plants grow, they are eaten by the animals. The animals are killed by predators, and what is not eaten is left to decompose to nourish the insects and plants, and the cycle starts all over. This IS the way God designed nature. There is no reason to believe this process was different in the Garden of Eden.

Again, this is what we observe of the ecosystem. If God never intended carnivores to eat meat, then He would have designed them differently, for example, lions with molar teeth for chewing plants. A lion, with sharp teeth for killing, is not an efficient creation for the processing of plant matter. Therefore, God's design is flawed, because He intended the lion to eat plants, but equipped it for killing. If you believe in a young-earth, then you MUST believe in a flawed creation!

With that said, let's examine a few creatures of God's creation that proves there was death before Adam's Fall.

Spiders, Snakes, and Poison

Spiders are wondrous creatures. They spin their silk webs in order to ensnare their victims before consuming them. How would they have survived in a pre-death world? Would their webs have been used to catch falling leaves? No, they could just simply go into a tree, or to the ground, to feast on the leaves. Spiders were created with only one diet in mind...a dead insect.

Also, why were some spiders created with poison? What is the purpose of this

Genesis 2:17 is God's direct instructions to Adam. God told Adam...

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Using a common, literal interpretation, when Adam ate the fruit, he should have died physically that day. Did Adam die the same day he ate the fruit? No, he did not. There are only two possibilities. First, God lied to Adam. We know that God cannot lie, so this is not the case. The only possible alternative left is that God did not mean physical death, but spiritual. When Adam ate the fruit, he sinned, which caused separation between him and God, or spiritual death. Based on this verse, it is conclusive that the Fall of Man did not bring physical death into the world.

poison? They didn't need to poison the leaves, or whatever else they were supposed to eat in the Garden. And, it could not have been for self-defense, since there were no predators in the Garden? In fact, the same thing goes for poisonous snakes. Poison only has one purpose...to kill. Even poisons that incapacitate are for the same thing in the end, for once the creature is incapacitated, it is consumed.

The only logical conclusion is that God created poison to kill. Poison serves no purpose in a calm, friendly Garden with no death. If God did create poison, according to the young earth model, then His creation was not perfect, as the poison served no purpose.

Venus Fly Trap

I'm sure everyone has seen one of these carnivorous plants. Before the fall of man, did it catch falling leaves? It certainly could not have evolved this trait after the Garden.

Other plants that eat insects are the Sundew and the Pitcher Plant. These plants live in wet places, where there is poor nitrogen content in the soil. The plants get the nitrogen they need from the insects.

Bats

Bats feed off of flying insects. Before the Fall, did they use their natural radar to catch falling leaves and eat them?

The previous three examples list insect eating organisms. Many young earth creationist organizations now teach that insects do not fall in the category of "*nephesh creatures*." Their current teaching is that death before sin only applied to these *nephesh* creations.¹ This term is generally applied to land-dwelling creations, which Adam named in Genesis 2:19. By picking and choosing the type of creatures this "no death before sin" rule applies to, young earth creationists avoid problems such as insect and microorganism death. The "*nephesh rule*" of interpretation allows them to ignore clear evidence that insects died before the Fall.

Sea Lions, Seals, and Walrus (and Penguins)

All of these marine mammals feed on fish. To get around this argument, young earth creationists could again claim that fish are not "*nephesh creatures*," since they were not named by Adam.

This list could go on for many pages. But, I'm sure you get the point already. There was clearly death before sin. Young earth creationists resort to the "*nephesh*" rule in order to avoid any problems, picking and choosing which creatures are truly "*nephesh*" and which ones are not. Naturally, if the evidence for an organism's death contradicts the young earth view, the organism is said to be non-*nephesh*.

Conclusion

According to the young-earth model, there is no death before sin. However, why did God create creatures designed specifically for killing? God is perfect, and his creatures in the Garden would have been created perfectly to fit into the ecosystem. Poison has no purpose but to kill. According to the young-earth model, the "perfect" animal created by God would not need poison. Yet poison exists. Young-earth creationists cannot explain this.

This is not so much an issue of old-earth/young-earth, as it is about biblical interpretation. This debate stems from their inaccurate assumptions that "death before sin" equates to physical death, when in fact, Adam and Eve "died spiritually" when they ate the apple, not physically.

¹ answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/bad_things.asp