

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Biblical Inerrancy and the Young vs. Old Earth Debate | with Dr. Hugh Ross

(October 22, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, the first book I ever read on astronomy and the fine-tuning of the universe was a book called 'The Fingerprint of God' by Dr. Hugh Ross. This is back in the early 90's when I first came to Southern Evangelical Seminary to get a degree. And I was fascinated by the book and that many of the arguments in that book made their way into 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.'

It's a great privilege to have Dr. Hugh Ross on the program with me today. Right now, we are recording live at Southern Evangelical Seminary Steadfast Conference just south of Charlotte, North Carolina. And Dr. Hugh Ross is here. He's doing some presentations. He also is debating Dr. Terry Mortensen on does inerrancy require a young Earth view? Or do you have to come to Young Earth view if you believe in inerrancy?

And of course, Dr. Ross is going to say no, and Dr. Mortensen is going to say yes. We'll report on that after it happens. I'm actually the moderator of the debate, but we're just a couple hours before the debate. And here is Dr. Hugh Ross, ladies and gentlemen. Dr. Ross. Yeah.

HUGH:

Thank you for having me on.

FRANK:

It's great having you here. I want to talk about so much also this book, 'Rescuing Inerrancy.' But let's start at the beginning, because when the universe was created, it has left us with some clues that we can actually observe. How do we know, Dr. Ross, there was a creation event from science? How do we know that?

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HUGH:

Well, we know that first from the space time theorems. Those theorems basically have just two assumptions. The universe contains mass. We're both living evidence that the universe contains Mass. Number 2, the equations of general relativity reliably describe the movements of stars and galaxies in the universe, which we can now prove to 17 place of the decimal.

And so, the conclusion of the theorem is space and time have a beginning, space and time are created, which implies that the causal agent of the universe must be an entity beyond matter, energy, space and time. And secondarily, our telescopes take us back in time. So, the farther away we look, the farther back in time we see because of the finite velocity of light. And today, astronomers have the power to actually directly observe the entire history of the universe from 10 to the minus 35 seconds after the cosmic creation event, right up to the present.

And it's that capacity that reveals to us that there indeed must be a creator who not only transcends space and time, but is a personal being, in that we see that the fine-tuning requires an agent that's at least a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion times more intelligent, more knowledgeable, more creative, more powerful, more caring and loving than any human being on the planet. And only the God of the Bible amongst the gods and religions of the world fits that description.

FRANK:

For those of you who don't know, ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Ross has a PhD in astrophysics and has written so many great books on this topic that you can just go to reasons.org which is his organization, and see so many of those books, so many of his articles you can actually read for free there.

Now, just before we came on the air, Dr. Ross, we were talking about the fact that when we look into our telescopes, we're actually viewing history. How does that help us discover what happened in the past all the way back to the creation event? Because you just mentioned we can get all the way back to the creation event itself. How do we go that far back?

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HUGH:

Just by looking far away. So, when I look at the Andromeda galaxy, I'm looking two and a half million light years away. When we look at the sun, we see it as it was eight and a quarter minutes ago, because that's how long it took light to reach us.

So, if we look at a very distant galaxy, like the James Webb Space Telescope is doing, we're seeing the state of the universe when it was only a few hundred million years old. And then the telescopes that we use to measure the radiation left over from the cosmic creation event, they show us the state of the universe when it was 380,000 years old.

And the polarization signals we get from that cosmic microwave background radiation gives us a state of the universe when it was a hundred billionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second after the cosmic creation event. So, we can get really close to the creation event. And it's that ability that gives us the most compelling, rigorous scientific evidence that a creator beyond space and time made the universe.

FRANK:

So, when we're looking into a telescope, we're seeing the past. Ladies and gentlemen, when you look at the sun, as Dr. Ross just said, you're not seeing the sun right now. You're seeing it eight and a quarter minutes ago. So, this is a little bit different than most other areas of academic inquiry. We can actually see the past in astronomy.

HUGH:

We're seeing it directly without any assumptions. Now, there's a problem with that. We astronomers are completely ignorant of the present, but we do know what happened in the past.

FRANK:

So, we can look into the past. And I guess if someone is listening right now and says, well, when we look out there into the cosmos, we see what appears to be a universe that is billions of years old. But doesn't the Bible teach that the universe is just thousands of years old? How do we somehow bridge this apparent contradiction?

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HUGH:

Well, I did not grow up in a Christian home, didn't really get to meet a serious Christian until they showed up at Caltech for post-doctoral research. That was nine years after I dedicated my life to Jesus Christ. First time I read the Bible was age 17, started in Genesis 1. But right away I realized these days of creation must be six consecutive long periods of time.

Because the word for day obviously is three distinct literal definitions. In creation day one, it uses the word day for the daylight hours. Creation day four is contrasting seasons, days, and years. As a day is 24 hours and Genesis 2:4 uses the same word day to refer to the entirety of creation history.

So, it's day is a long period of time. But the other thing I notice is only the first six creation days are closed out. The first six days all end with an evening morning phrase, which basically is telling us each day is a definite start time and a definite end time. When you get to creation day seven, there's no evening morning phrase, implying we're still in God's seventh day. And Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4 both state that explicitly we're to live our lives in such a way that we can enter into God's seventh day.

And it's a day when God stops creating. Says that explicitly in Genesis chapter two. And what we notice is all the evidence for God's miraculous creation activity is previous to the human era. There's none of that after the human era. For six days, God creates. On the seventh day, he stops creating. And the principle of the Sabbath is we work six days. On the seventh day, we focus on the most important issues of life. Why did God create?

Multiple times in the Bible it says before God created anything, He began His works of redemption. That's what I believe He's doing on the seventh day. He ceases from His work of creation to redeem billions of human beings unto Himself. And when that work is done, we'll have the eighth day of creation.

FRANK:

Now, some people will say, but Dr. Ross, in Exodus it says that God created for six days and rested on the seventh. So, doesn't that imply those are all 24 hour days? How would you respond to that?

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HUGH:

Well, let's address five times in the Torah. Only in Deuteronomy and Exodus does it give you an analogy between God's work week and our work week. And in none of those five passages does the preposition exist. That's only an English translation where it says for in six days, no preposition, the original.

And also, it talks about a Sabbath, not the Sabbath, implying there's more than one Sabbath. And what you see in Leviticus 25:3 is that you have a Sabbath for the agricultural land. It's to be worked six years and given a Sabbath rest of one year. Now for us humans, it's 24 hours. And this is all based on our biological limitations. Because of our biological limitations, we're most productive when we work six 24 hour days and, and we rest a seven 24 hour day, agricultural land, six years and one year.

Now, God is Spirit, which implies he has no biological limitations. So, His work week could be any period of time that He chooses. And so, there's no equation in Exodus 20. It's an analogy. Just like you would have to say, well, what about the eight days that we celebrate? The eight days of the tabernacle that the Jews celebrate for the time they spent in the wilderness.

So, the eight days is an analogy for the 40 years. Likewise, the six days and the one day are an analogy contrasting the human Sabbath period with the agricultural land Sabbath period with God's agricultural period or God's Sabbath period.

FRANK:

I think Dr. John Walton, who is a biblical scholar and talks about Genesis as well, and you talk about him a little bit in the book--

HUGH:

A lot in that book.

FRANK:

...'Rescuing Inerrancy' points this out, and I think he's right about it. And he says, the Bible was not written to us, it was written for us. And so, Genesis is not written to 21st century Christians.

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It's written to the people who had just left Egypt and had been wandering in the desert or are wandering in the desert for 40 years. And they're not asking the questions we're asking. They're not walking through the desert going, I wonder how old this place is. That's not their question.

They're wondering, is Yahweh the true God or are the Egyptian gods the true God? Is the Egyptian creation story true or is there another creation story that's true? In other words, I've seen scholars now say that Genesis 1 is a polemic against the Egyptian creation stories. What do you say about that?

HUGH:

I totally agree with that, but I would argue it's not limited to that. Genesis 1 through 11 is doing way more than just a polemic against the gods of the different religions surrounding the ancient Near East. And I'd also dispute Walton's claim that the ancients didn't care one bit about science or cosmology. They cared very deeply about science and cosmology. They built stone observatory telescopes all over the world. Thousands of them were constructed. Stonehenge isn't the only one.

I mean, we just visited Britain and they're all over Great Britain, and the Isles, and all over the world. So, they cared very deeply about cosmology. They actually knew a lot about the universe. They knew, for example, the distance of the sun, the distance of the moon. They knew that Earth was a spherical body, not a flat system. They knew it was spherical.

They had measured the diameter of the Earth to 1% precision. They knew the stars were bodies like the sun because they couldn't measure parallax. So, they had a very well worked out cosmology. I think what we need to appreciate, though, is they lacked the mathematics to predict future positions of planets from the sun center perspective. Even though they knew that was a correct cosmology, they didn't have algebra to be able to do the calculations.

So, they did it from an earth center perspective, where they could use Greek geometry to predict the future positions of planets. So, I think we understand their mathematical limitations. We realize they weren't ignorant, and they cared very deeply about this. And notice all the ancient Near Eastern creation stories are loaded with cosmology. So, the claim that

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Genesis 1 to 11 has nothing to do with cosmology or the origin of the universe, I don't think that's defensible.

FRANK:

Right. No, I would agree with you on that. I just liked his observation that it's written to us or not written to us, written for us. And I've heard it put this way. If you do look at Genesis 1, just the initial creation story, it does appear to correct the Egyptian creation story.

HUGH:

It does. It does indeed.

FRANK:

Maybe you can give some insights on how it does that.

HUGH:

Well, for example, it tells us that the universe has a beginning. And many do say that what's unique to the Bible, it includes a beginning of space and time itself. What you saw in the surrounding regions, they believe that God or gods create within space and time that eternally exists. So, the Bible directly contradicts that. And the Bible gives details about cosmology that you don't see in the ancient Near East.

FRANK:

Like what, what would it do? What, what does the Bible do?

HUGH:

Well, I mean, what attracted me the first time I picked up a Bible in my teenage years is it declares at least three if not four of the fundamental foundational features of what we call Big Bang cosmology. That not only does the universe have a space time beginning, it's governed by laws of physics that never change. Or one of those laws is a pervasive law of decay.

And multiple passages talk about the stretching out of the heavens, the expansion of the universe, and how if it's subject to decay, that's a universe that gets colder as it gets older, as it expands. And so, that was impressive to me as a teenager. The Bible not only gets the

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cosmology correct, it predicts future scientific discoveries, because no astronomer had a clue about Big Bang cosmology until the 20th century. So, the fact that it has predictive power, that told me this isn't just an invention of human beings.

FRANK:

When we were talking before the show, your wife Kathy had mentioned verse 4 in Genesis 1 has a bit of a polemic in it as well. What is that?

HUGH:

Well, she was referring to creation day four, where a lot of people think day four.

FRANK:

Yeah, sorry, day four. Yeah.

HUGH:

The sun, moon, and stars weren't created until the fourth day. And we need to realize that in biblical Hebrew, they don't have verb tenses like we have in English. That passage in verse 16 is simply saying, by the time you get to the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars are completed entities.

It doesn't tell you when in the past God created them. And what attracted me about Genesis 1 is how perfectly it follows the scientific method. I was naive at age 17, I didn't realize the scientific method came from the pages of Scripture. So, of course it follows a scientific method.

But step one, don't attempt to interpret until you first establish the frame of reference. For Genesis 1:1, the frame of reference is the universe. For Genesis 1:2, it changes the frame of reference to the surface of planet Earth, the surface of the waters underneath the clouds, not above the clouds.

And I run into scientists all the time that say Genesis 1 teaches scientific nonsense. How can anyone believe this crazy book that we call the Bible? It's like, well, if you have the point of view of God above looking down on the Earth, I agree.

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It's 100% scientific nonsense. Put the point of view and the surface of the waters underneath the clouds, everything is correctly stated and the correct chronological sequence. And it's the only creation account in all the religions of the world that gets 100% score.

FRANK:

Just give us a few of those points that the Bible gets right in order.

HUGH:

Well, with the creation of the universe, you got matter, energy, space, and time in existence. There's light in the universe, but it's dark on the surface of the waters of the Primordial Earth. Job 38 explains why. It's dark because God blanketed the seas with clouds that kept the light out.

So, when it says, let there be light on creation day one, this is when God transforms Earth's atmosphere from being opaque to visible light, where visible light can now come through to the surface, which allows photosynthesis to begin. So, I think the Bible is implying the origin of light is at the beginning of creation day one.

But the atmosphere, because it lacks oxygen, remains hazy all the way through until the fourth day, where it says, let there be the sun, moon, and stars, so they may serve as signs to mark seasons, days, and years. And it's referring to creatures on the surface of the Earth.

And God hasn't created animals yet. They come on creation day five. But animals need to see the position of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky in order to regulate their clocks, their biological clocks. So, they need to know where those objects are. And that can only happen if the atmosphere is transparent.

And I describe, not in that book, but another book, how an experiment done in 2018. They took the atmosphere of the early Earth and gradually boosted the oxygen up. When it hit 8% oxygen in the atmosphere, the atmosphere goes from a thick haze to transparent. Now you can see the sun, moon, and stars in the sky. And we know scientifically that occurred just before the Cambrian explosion of life. That's when the animals show up.

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FRANK:

Let me ask you two things related to that. When in verse 16 or day four, he says he created the sun, the moon, and the stars, could that have been a bit of also a polemic against these other viewpoints that thought the sun, moon, and the stars were deities?

HUGH:

It's definitely a polemic against the Egyptian view that these bodies were gods. Okay, definitely.

FRANK:

Secondly, you brought up the difference between verse one and verse two. And I've just learned this in the past few years. I never really considered it. But in verse one, He talks about creating... The text talks about the creation of the heavens and the earth, the whole universe. And then verse two, suddenly you've gone from creation of the whole universe to now you're at the Earth.

HUGH:

Right.

FRANK:

And is it possible, since it says in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, that that could have been a long time before you went from the creation of the universe to being on the surface of the Earth? So, regardless of how long the days were, you could be at billions of years already?

HUGH:

Yes.

FRANK:

Is that fair to say?

HUGH:

That's actually purposely built into Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The grammatical structure of those two sentences, plus the order in which the verbs appear in those two sentences, it's different from

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the rest of Genesis 1, but it implies that there's an unspecified passage of time between Genesis 1:1 and what's described in 1:2 and what's described in 1:2 and in 1:3. So, you're right. You could easily have billions of years even before you get to creation day one.

FRANK:

Okay, I know you can't speak for people who take a different view on this from the young Earth perspective, but you have debated many of them. We're going to have a debate here and a little over an hour on that issue. What would be as steel man it as best you can. What would be the response from someone who believes in a young Earth? What would be... How would they deal with the scientific evidence which seems to suggest a longer period of time? A much longer period of time?

And secondly, how would they deal with this phenomenon we just talked about, or this interpretation we just talked about is better put that we go from the creation of the universe in verse one to now suddenly we're on the Earth in verse two, and there's no time indicator there? That could be a long period of time. So, first of all, how do they deal? Why don't we start with the text first? How do they deal with the text when you say--?

HUGH:

Well, they would agree with me that there's an unspecified period of time between the events of Genesis 1:1 and 1:3. But they say, well, if it's unspecified, it could be zero. And I'm saying, well, it could be billions of years. They say, well, it could be zero years too, because the text doesn't specify how much time passed.

FRANK:

Okay, so from the text, might we agree with John Lennox to say that the Bible leaves the age of the universe indeterminate?

HUGH:

Well, John actually points out the very same point. The text allows for a long period of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3, and therefore, hey, you want the days of creation be 24 hours? You can still have a universe that's 13.8 billion years old. There's nothing from his point of view

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that would forbid an old universe. I simply add on the fact is that I think there's a very strong biblical case that these creation days are long periods of time, not just 24 hours.

FRANK:

And what would? Just give us one line of evidence to suggest biblically they're longer.

HUGH:

Well, we already talked about how there's no evening and morning.

FRANK:

In day seven.

HUGH:

Day seven.

FRANK:

Day seven. How about the other days? What would you say?

HUGH:

Well, like if you go to day six, it tells us in Genesis 1, God created the human male and the human female on creation day six. You go to Genesis 2, Adam's created first, and he's created outside the garden. God puts him in the garden. And while he's in the garden, he watches the trees grow. And then God says, I want you to tend the garden.

So, he starts tending the garden, I think long enough to realize there's got to be more to life than gardening. And God says, well, now I want you to name all the soulful animals, animals that are endowed with mind, will, and emotions. So, he names all those animals. What does the text say?

God observes that Adam is alone. And, you know, we're both men. And it takes time for most men to realize that they're lonely, more than a few hours. So, he's lonely and then God performs surgery on him. He recovers from his anesthesia; he's introduced to a new creature.

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And what comes out of his mouth in the Hebrew? Hapa am, a word used more than 20 times in the Old Testament, almost always translated at long last. So, the events described in Genesis 2 can't be squeezed in a 24 hour period. This is clearly much longer than 24 hours. And if the sixth day is a long period of time and the seventh day is long period of time, the grammatical structure of all seven days tells us all the days are long periods of time.

FRANK:

I love what my friend Brad Stein who is a Christian comedian says about that. He said about the naming of the animals. He says when Adam started naming the animals, he was really creative. He'd say hippopotamus, rhinoceros, by the end of the day, ox. He's just run out of gas. There'd be a lot of animals.

HUGH:

The syllables get shorter.

FRANK:

That's right. Ape. I just can't go on. [Laughter] Okay, so how would then say a young earth person who's schooled on this kind of material deal with the scientific evidence? Which, God has written two books, ladies and gentlemen. He's written, yes, the Bible through men, but he's also written the book of nature.

So, we have his word, and we have his works. And it appears when we look at his works, this place is older than just a few thousand years. So, how would somebody who takes the old Earth position, Sorry, young Earth position, deal with the scientific evidence? What would they say about the astronomy the speed of light, all that?

HUGH:

Well, they would claim that creation is cursed. And so, you can't trust the record of nature because it got corrupted at the fall of Adam. And so, they misinterpret Genesis 3:17, where it says cursed is the ground. But if you actually read the whole verse, cursed is the ground because of you. God didn't change the ground.

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It was humanity that changed. It's our sin that makes the ground less productive than God intended. But believing that nature is cursed and corrupted and untrustworthy, they say we can use that theological interpretation to discount any findings that we have coming from science. Science can't be trusted. Only the Bible can be trusted. And then only their interpretation of the Bible can be trusted.

FRANK:

Okay, now would these folks... I mean, you're debating Dr. Mortensen today. We'll see what he says. Ken Ham would be another. There may be several other folks who take a more young earth position. We consider them all believers, saved people. Would they consider this to be an issue of salvation that we need to divide over?

HUGH:

Well, they would argue that this is an issue of biblical authority. I would argue it's an issue of biblical interpretation because I accept the full authority of Scripture. I accept sola scriptura. But they would argue that, hey, it's an issue of biblical authority. And what was your other point?

FRANK:

Well, I guess I would want to know if they think it's an issue of salvation. Like, if you have an old earth view, does that somehow jeopardize your salvation? Because I've heard some say, well, if you take Genesis in a non-literal way, or I guess the way they define what literal means, then you've got to say, take the resurrection in a non-literal way. Your response?

HUGH:

Yeah, their argument is that if you actually take an old earth perspective, you got death of plants and animals before Adam, and that means that blood is being shed before Adam and a good God wouldn't do that. And so, they would actually argue that if you take an old earth perspective, you're denying the doctrine of the atonement, and that is a salvation issue.

But you can go to the book of Hebrews, and it makes it very clear that the shed blood of bulls, and goats, and sheep is a symbol for the blood that really does save and makes it explicit. The shed blood of oxen, goats, and sheep has no benefit for salvation at all.

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Only the blood of Christ saves us. And that this shed blood, and the sacrifices was designed to point people to the blood that really would save us. So, on that basis, I would argue that an old Earth view in no way threatens the doctrine of the atonement, and therefore it's not a salvation issue.

Just to be fair, most young earth creations would say you could be old earth and a Christian. Some of them think you can't and would declare old earth as a heresy, but most do not. But they would say that if you take an old earth perspective, it damages the gospel message, so prevents people from the understanding the Gospel message.

In fact, years ago, the president of the Institute for Creation Research said we should never allow an old earth creationist to be a teacher or a leader within the Christian community because their message damages the Gospel. So, they would agree it's not, "a salvation issue", but it does damage the salvation message. I think that's the fairest way to put it.

FRANK:

I would argue, though, if you take a very literal view of the first two verses of Genesis, the Bible leaves the age of the earth indeterminate.

HUGH:

It does, it does. And they don't dispute that. But based on what we see elsewhere in Scripture, we think that indeterminate time is zero.

FRANK:

Okay, well, they could say that. But then since God has another revelation, which is what we can see with our own eyes, how do they deal with the scientific evidence? Let's just say the speed of light, the expansion of the universe. How do they say, how can they interpret that in a young Earth way?

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HUGH:

Well, some of them will say we deny evidentialism and we go with presuppositionalism, which means evidence doesn't count, physical evidence doesn't count. What counts is our assumptions about what the Bible states.

So, I would trump any scientific evidence, which means you basically discount all the scientific evidence. Other young Earth creationists say, well, it's our fallen nature that makes it difficult for us to interpret God's book of nature. And only those of us who have a young Earth perspective are able to correctly interpret the book of nature.

And so, they try to come up with an evidential response to say, well, maybe the velocity of light is infinite towards the Earth and half the velocity of light the other way. Or maybe God sent light on the way, it doesn't actually come from the stars and galaxies. Or they might say the radioactive decays were accelerated by a billion times at the time of the flood.

But the problem with all those approaches, those are things we can measure scientifically. We can prove that none of those assumptions are correct by direct measurements. But again, they will fall back on saying, well, nature is corrupted, it's fallen.

Therefore, we really can't trust what it says, but again, I notice these young Earth creationists are prepared to trust their refrigerators, and their microwave ovens, and their smartphones. So, if nature can't be trusted, how do you explain all this reliable technology we have?

FRANK:

Also, yeah, if nature can't be trusted, why does Paul say in Romans 1 that his invisible qualities and divine attributes are clearly seen so that men are without excuse? If nature can't be trusted, then Romans 1 is false.

HUGH:

Well, they do have a pushback on that. They will say, well, we can trust nature to reveal the existence of God, we just can't trust nature to reveal anything else.

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FRANK:

Why?

HUGH:

Well, that's an assumption they made.

FRANK:

That seems like special pleading.

HUGH:

It's special pleading. Moreover, when we look at inerrancy, it's that the Bible is error free on everything that it touches, everything that it speaks about. Not just faith and practice and doctrine, but science, history and geography.

Well, God's second book is the same way. It's trustworthy in everything that it touches. Not just saying the existence of God, but literally the nature of the natural realm. And the fact is, the science was born out of Protestant Christianity and was based on the fact that Christianity, the laws of physics, the constants of physics, can be trusted. The Bible says they don't change.

FRANK:

Where does it say that, Dr. Ross?

HUGH:

Jeremiah 33:25, the laws that govern the heavens and the earth are fixed. Or Romans 8 where it talks about this law of decay, how it pervades the entirety of the universe. So, it's basically telling us we can trust that these laws are immutable. If they're immutable, we've got a basis for doing scientific research. If they're changing all the time, why even bother doing science?

FRANK:

Well, some young earthers might say, well, a couple of things. Maybe the speed of light was different in the past, or maybe God created the universe with apparent age, like say he created Adam with apparent age.

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HUGH:

So, well, here's a pushback on that. Every time we astronomers look at a spectrum of a star or a galaxy, we're measuring the velocity of light. We see that it's the same no matter how distant the star or the galaxy. Our measurements tell us it's never changed. And I've noticed most lay people know at least one physics equation, often only one E equals MC squared. Well, C is the velocity of light.

So, if you make the velocity of light a million times faster at the time of Adam, you make the heat and the light from the sun a trillion times hotter. And the Bible makes it quite clear that Adam survived anything unusual happening about the sun. So, if the sun remained constant in his light, the velocity of light likewise remained constant. It can't be different for Him than it is for us.

FRANK:

So, if you were to change the velocity of light right now, that would affect all the other constants of nature or all the other laws of nature.

HUGH:

Well, it also would damage all your proteins. Several of your proteins critically depend on the value of the velocity of light. Change that velocity in the slightest, those proteins no longer function, you immediately die.

FRANK:

Okay, so I suppose you could say God did that and held it all together, but that seems kind of an ad hoc explanation.

HUGH:

Well, it's not only ad hoc, it would be measurable. If God did that, we would see the effects.

FRANK:

How would we see the effects? Suppose the universe is 6,000 years old, and at what appears to be just past 6,000 years old, God did something odd to make it appear old. What would we see? Would you see something?

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HUGH:

Well, from a young Earth perspective, if He artificially aged the universe, I would expect, say, everything to look, measure to be, say, 13 billion years old, plus or minus 5,000 years. The problem is, it measures to be 7 billion years old, plus or minus 7 billion. So, we see age measurements that range from 0 to nearly 14 billion. It's not like all the ages are within a narrow time window.

FRANK:

All the ages for what now?

HUGH:

Ages for stars and galaxies.

FRANK:

Oh, stars and galaxies, yeah. Okay. All right.

HUGH:

So, the fact that we see this huge range means that God would only do that if he was purposely trying to deceive us about the age of the universe. And eight times the Bible tells us it's impossible for God to lie or deceive. So, I could accept God changing the ages all by the same amount to within a 10,000 year window, but that's not what we see.

FRANK:

Now, you believe in a literal Adam?

HUGH:

Yes.

FRANK:

Okay. And you're not an evolutionist?

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HUGH:

Right.

FRANK:

Because a lot of people will say, oh, if you buy into billions of years, you're helping evolution, which of course is nonsense. But they say that. How far back in your view do you think the first Adam, you know, Adam was created? How far back would you go?

HUGH:

Well, where I would agree with my young Earth friends, I believe that we're all descended from Adam and Eve, that God specially created, and that Adam and Eve was created thousands of years ago, not millions of years ago. Now, I think it's in the tens of thousands. They would say it's only a few thousand.

So, we may differ by a factor of 10. But we both differ with the evolutionists by about five zeros. And I think we share a lot in common. We do believe in special creation. We believe the universe is created, life was created, humanity was created. The universe, I would argue, is old, billions of years old. But humanity is recent.

Notice, it's the last creation miracle described in Genesis. So, we're created at the end of God's creation activity. So, we're recent on the scene. Now, I would argue, Based on Genesis 2, Adam and Eve would have to be created during the last ice age. So, it can't be as recent as 5,000 years ago.

FRANK:

Which would be how far back?

HUGH:

Well, the last ice age went from about 15,000 years ago to 120,000 years ago. And the reason I take that interpretation, Genesis 2 says that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where four known rivers come close together.

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Well, that location today is more than 200 ft below sea level in the Southeast portion of the Persian Gulf. But during the last ice age, when the sea levels were 390 ft lower, it would have been above sea level. Which implies that God created Adam and Eve sometime during an ice age.

FRANK:

Well, according to my wife, the last ice age was last winter. Okay, so we've got another one coming up. By the way, climate change has been happening forever, ladies and gentlemen. There was an ice age 15,000 years ago to 120,000.

HUGH:

And you're right, another ice age is coming.

FRANK:

So, how does it work out genetically, Dr. Ross? I know you have people on your staff that are into this. Fuz Rana might be one. When you trace back genetics, is it possible, genetically, that every living human being came from just a pair of two? And if so, how far back?

HUGH:

Well, you can make that work regardless of the genetics of Eve, once you get back, say, earlier than about 60 to 80,000 years ago. Now, we've made the point that when God created Eve, He could have created her with distinct reproductive eggs.

So, if all the eggs are reproductively distinct, you can easily explain the diversity of human genetics within even a short period of time. You don't need a long period of time, but you don't even need to do that if you have Adam and Eve created during an ice age. Everything fits. And keep in mind, our best scientific date for the origin of anatomically modern humans is 150,000 years ago, plus or minus 150,000 years.

We do not have an accurate scientific date for the origin of humanity. And the Bible actually gives us a more precise date than we can get from the science. And that's because we don't have a good radiometric tool for the era in which humans were created. Carbon 14 ceases to be reliable when you get earlier than about 45,000 years. And you got to go back 250,000 years

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before you pick up another reliable radiometric tool. So, we're in that gap where all you've got are indirect methods.

FRANK:

Now, you and I have a mutual friend in Dr. William Lane Craig. And Dr. Craig's been a champion of the cosmological argument for quite a while. And of course, you're a champion of that argument as well, as well as the fine-tuning argument and so is Dr. Craig. Dr. Craig has come out recently, though, with a historical Adam book. Now, I'm at a disadvantage here because I haven't actually read the book. I've just heard him talk about it. You've interacted with it a little bit.

HUGH:

Yeah, I've read the book. Yeah.

FRANK:

In your view, and you guys are both believers, so we're just an intramural debate. What do you think Dr. Craig is essentially saying there? What does he get right, in your view? Does he get anything wrong?

HUGH:

Well, just to be clear, a few weeks ago, Bill and I had an online dialogue on the Kalam Cosmological Argument, where we talked about the theology, philosophy, and the astrophysics of the cosmic creation event, and we basically agreed on everything.

So that's up on our website. But in terms of his historical Adam, geneticists persuaded him that he had to go with a much earlier date for Adam if you wanted to have all of humanity descended from a single Adam and Eve.

FRANK:

Now, why is that? Why did they say that to him?

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HUGH:

Well, I mean, you got famous geneticists like Francis Collins with his book 'The Language of God.'

FRANK:

I don't trust him any further than I can throw him, given what he's done politically.

HUGH:

Okay, yeah, but he is a geneticist, and he was basically arguing that if you look at the genetic diversity of the present human population, it implies that humanity had to be descended not from two people, but by 10,000 people. Now, his organization, BioLogos, has recently said we could go as low as 120, but they're still on record as saying it can't be two.

FRANK:

Let me just interject here, so people may be confused. Francis Collins was Tony Fauci's boss.

HUGH:

Yes.

FRANK:

And Francis Collins was involved not only in advocating for LGBTQ, but also experiments on aborted babies and tried to censor Stanford trained epidemiologists and others during the COVID lockdown. So, I don't have a lot of respect for a man that would do those things. He may be a Christian, but he, in my view, hasn't been acting that way. But that's independent of his academic credentials.

Although I will say, and you would know even better than me, it seems to me that as soon as 'Language of God' came out in 2006, it was obsolete because his whole junk DNA approach was refuted when we found out that the non-coding regions of the DNA were not indeed junk, as he said. So, he may be a good scientist in other areas, but I just have a lot of skepticism.

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HUGH:

Well, to be fair to Francis Collins, his argument for the population of 10,000 was independent of the junk DNA evidence.

FRANK:

Sure, yeah.

HUGH:

However, what we pointed out to him in our dialogues with him is your 10,000 number is dependent on an evolutionary assumption. You're assuming that we humans have a common ancestor with the Neanderthals and the chimpanzees. If that assumption is incorrect, then your 10,000 figure may also be incorrect. Moreover, when you do field experiments on mammals, horses, and sheep, orangutans, what we discover is if you take a male and a female sheep, for example, isolate them, and let them reproduce.

You always wind up with way more genetic diversity in the future generations than what your genetics models predict. And something that's very significant. We notice the departure from what their models predict is greater and greater dependent on the generation time of the species. Now, for the sheep, we're talking a one year period between being born, being able to reproduce. For us humans, we're talking 20 years.

And so, we would expect that you're going to get the greatest overestimate of population ancestry with humans than would you do with any other mammal. But the mammal experiments basically tell us that these numbers are upper limits. They are not an actual number. And moreover, that 10,000 number is an average for the whole population history. It doesn't really get you down to the population of the ancestral individuals.

So, in our opinion, the idea that the biblical message that we're descended from two individuals in only two individuals is genetically defensible, there's nothing in the genetics that would contradict what the Bible states about all humanity being descended from Adam and Eve. The one place where I'll agree with Francis Collins, you can't make it work if we're talking Adam and Eve six to 10,000 years ago. We need Adam and Eve a little earlier than that, but not much earlier.

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FRANK:

So, let me see if I understand this right. You're saying that experiments on, say, sheep show you get a lot more genetic diversity. And that's a short generation.

HUGH:

Yes.

FRANK:

And if you have a longer generation from, say, birth to reproduction, you should get even more genetic diversity.

HUGH:

Yes.

FRANK:

And yet the people who are saying that Adam and Eve, if they existed at all, had to be way, way back, maybe 500,000 years, aren't taking that fact into account when they do those calculations.

HUGH:

They're not. Yeah, that's the problem. And that's the problem with Bill Craig's model, because he's got Adam and Eve back at three quarters of a million years ago.

FRANK:

750,000 or so. Yeah.

HUGH:

Maybe even a million. And it's like it's all dependent on the genetics he was being taught being correct. But it's not correct. And therefore, we don't have to put Adam and Eve that far back. And we don't have to claim that Neanderthals are fully human. And the evidence that Neanderthals are not human in the scientific literature is overwhelming.

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And so, there are papers, I'll concede this. There are papers in the scientific literature claiming that Neanderthals were just as intellectually capable as us humans. But there's many more papers disputing the claim.

FRANK:

But is there Neanderthal DNA in human DNA? Did they interbreed?

HUGH:

That is not settled yet. There's evidence that that interbreeding took place. We know if it did take place, it's at a very low level, lower than the level of bestiality in the human population today. So, we know it's rare. I do agree that there is evidence for the interbreeding, but I don't see it as compelling evidence. You know, keep in mind, I mean, it's basically on the fact that ancient European skeletons we found dating back 30, 40,000 years ago show more affinity with Neanderthal DNA than humans that are dead today.

And so, they say, well, they must have interbred. But keep in mind, they're under the same environmental pressures. Now, environmental pressures for humans today aren't as significant as they were 40,000 years ago, because humans living in Europe 40,000 years ago stayed in Europe. They weren't moving around. They're probably moving around one or 200 miles at most, whereas humans today, we're mobile. And so, notice that we got people on one continent breeding with people on another continent.

And so, the fact that we see extra affinity to Neanderthal DNA 40,000 years ago, I would say it's suggestive that there was interbreeding, but it's not the proof. So, it's unsettled. And theologically, I think it's unsettled because I notice we have Genesis chapter six, where you've got the sons of God having intercourse with the daughters of men. And I see that fitting into Satan's strategy. If I can damage the image of God and humanity, I might be able to defeat God's plan.

So, I can see Satan trying to motivate humans into bestiality type practices, because that might be one way to damage the image of God. One thing we know for sure is the DNA that appears to be from Neanderthals in Europeans compared to Sub Saharan Africans, we know that genetically it has zero effect on our anatomy and zero effect in our behavior, which means that

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if the interbreeding did happen, it did not impact the image of God. The image of God is protected. And so, I see a battle between Satan and God. God trying to protect the image of God, Satan trying to destroy it. So, how this is all going to play out, we need to do a lot more research.

FRANK:

In your view, Dr. Ross, is there any interpretive difference that we should take, any hermeneutical difference we should take when we interpret what's written in Genesis 1 to 11 than from Genesis 12 to 50? Because some people will say that the first 11 chapters appear to be different. Bill Craig has said it's mytho history. What's your view on that?

HUGH:

Yeah, I find that strange because Bill Craig will say the first 11 chapters are mytho history, chapters 12 to 50 are history and chronological. When I read Genesis 1 to 11, I see way more textual clues that we're reading a chronology, and this is meant to be taken as historical. Far more clues than I see in Genesis 12 to 50. And it's like this is all part of one book.

I see nothing at the end of Genesis 11 or the beginning of Genesis 12 that would indicate a departure in the hermeneutic. I would expect to see a textual clue if indeed Bill's model and the model of, say, John Walton, indeed were correct. And by the way, with respect to John Walton, I would argue the Bible is inspired to communicate, not just to the generation of Moses, it was inspired to communicate to all generations.

FRANK:

Just briefly give our listeners Dr. Walton's view. We had him on the show a couple years ago, but just for this podcast, what does Dr. Walton think about Genesis, the creation account?

HUGH:

Well, he argues that Genesis 1 is speaking about the function of creation, not the history of creation or the science of creation. He argues that function is the most important point. And I completely agree With John, it is talking about function. I disagree that that's the most important point in Genesis.

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FRANK:

When he says function, what does he mean by that?

HUGH:

Well, basically, what the universe is designed to do, what the earth is designed to do, what the animals are designed to do. So, he actually claims it's a mistake to think that this is a creation text. It's simply telling us what is the function of what God made. We shouldn't be looking at it historically or scientifically. And he takes that approach to the entire Old Testament.

So, he'd also apply that to, say, the book of Job or the creation Psalms. And I'd say, well, I agree that it is talking about function, but I think more importantly, it's also dealing with history and creation and with science. But like Bill Craig, he's been persuaded that it's impossible to defend that view scientifically. But, hey, I'm the scientist, right?

FRANK:

You are. [Laughter]

HUGH:

And we have several hundred scientists that are part of our scholar community at Reasons to Believe. We have no problem taking it historically and scientifically as we look at our science. And so, I think it's important for us scientists to be communicating with theologians and philosophers and saying, hey, we need to be communicating with one another. The science that you think threatens your biblical interpretation, have you actually looked at the alternatives in the scientific literature? And we're more than happy to talk to you about this.

FRANK:

Well, friends, if you want to go much further, and you should, the book 'Rescuing Inerrancy: A Scientific Defense' by Dr. Hugh Ross would be very helpful to you. In fact, some of these concepts that he's put in this book, you'll hear when you hear the debate that Dr. Ross is about to have with Dr. Terry Mortensen.

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And we'll put a link in the show notes when that's available. Dr. Ross, it's always a pleasure to discuss these issues with you. Where can people go to learn more about what you're doing and see articles and see your books?

HUGH:

Well, you've already mentioned the website reasons.org. We also have a YouTube channel. So, you can go to our YouTube channel and see thousands of videos that we put up there. And we have a feature called News of the Day where we talk about the latest scientific discoveries and how they give us more evidence for the Christian faith. We're trying to demonstrate the principle you see in Job and Psalms. The more we learn about nature, the more evidence we accumulate for the supernatural handiwork of God.

FRANK:

The heavens declare the glory of God. That's absolutely correct. So, Dr. Ross, thanks so much for doing this, and we'll let everyone else know where they can watch the debate we're about to have. But in the meantime, get the book 'Rescuing Inerrancy, A Scientific Defense' and also go to reasons.org. All right, friends, great being with you. See you here next week. Lord willing.

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