

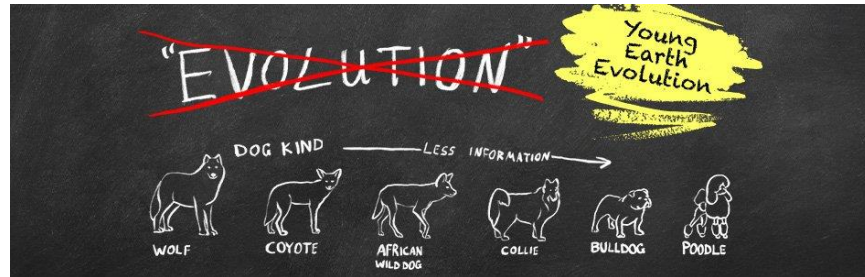
Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Can Creationists Accept Evolution?

ANSWERS IN GENESIS

Evolution is antithetical to Scripture, even within a young-earth paradigm.

1



The question of whether a creationist can accept evolution appears, at first blush, to be an oxymoron. After all, surely the two concepts are fundamentally opposed. Why would a creationist want to accept a concept they believe to be unbiblical? But it turns out, there are creationists who want to claim that God used evolution in some way. And no, they are not theistic evolutionists or evolutionary creationists, they still claim to be young-earth creationists.

As we will detail further on, the main problem is how the average person understands the word *evolution* and how some creationists are defining this term in their writings.

The tip of the spear on this issue is a professing young-earth creationist Dr. Ken Coulson of San Diego Christian College, author of the *Creation Unfolding* blog. Coulson makes the argument as follows: “Many Christians tend to dismiss the idea of significant biological change over time (also known as evolution). Yet interestingly, significant biological change does occur, and sometimes *very* rapidly.”¹ Coulson goes on to argue that there has been rapid change within the dog kind and therefore evolution has occurred. But is

Why would a creationist want to accept a concept they believe to be unbiblical? But it turns out, there are creationists who want to claim that God used evolution in some way.

¹ Ken Coulson, “Can a Christian Believe in ‘Evolution’?” *New Creation*, August 7, 2020, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://newcreation.blog/can-a-christian-believe-in-evolution/>.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

that evolution? This is where it can get confusing for people because of how most hear and understand the word *evolution*.

Defining *Evolution*

According to evolutionists, biological evolution is descent with modification. In fact, the UC Berkley evolution website, which is perhaps the best lay-level explanation of evolutionists' view of their own dogma on the internet, explicitly forbids calling evolution just change over time.² If evolution were simply change over time, no one would argue with it. Children mature into adults, caterpillars develop into moths and butterflies, and new species form.³ All of these things are change over time, and essentially no one would argue with them. But [evolution](#) encompasses a lot more than simply change over time.

Evolution, according to evolutionists, means "All life on Earth shares a common ancestor, just as you and your cousins share a common grandmother. Through the process of descent with modification, this common ancestor gave rise to the diverse species that we see documented in the fossil record and around us today. Evolution means that we're all distant cousins: humans and oak trees, hummingbirds and whales."⁴ In other words, evolution (as the word is commonly understood) is an explanation for the entire diversity of life on earth.

Once properly defined, it should be obvious that evolution is antithetical to Scripture. Scripture teaches that [God](#) made the various kinds of organisms to reproduce according to their respective kinds. There is no evolution in terms of complete common ancestry across the kind boundary. Redefining the word to simply mean "change over time" is a pointless gesture of accommodating secular ideas and can confuse people.

To be fair to Dr. Coulson, he wants to keep the use of *evolution* as "change over time" to stay within the bounds of Scripture: "So, let's embrace evolution, being careful to keep within the bounds of Scripture, but not so careful that we deny observational science."⁵ So when he says *evolution*, he means *change over time*. But are there limits to that change? He does not say (which is a problem), and the definition he provides could allow for any amount of change over any amount of time. Thus, even the attempt to define *evolution* as

² "An introduction to evolution," Berkeley, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolution-101/an-introduction-to-evolution/>.

³ Sangeet Lamichhaney et al., "Rapid hybrid speciation in Darwin's finches," *Science* 359, no. 6372 (November 2017): 224–228, <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.aao4593>.

⁴ "An introduction to evolution."

⁵ Coulson, "Can a Christian Believe in 'Evolution'?"

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

“change over time” is so elastic that millions of years and common ancestry could be shoved into it. And certainly some will feel more freedom to do so, perhaps using Dr. Coulson’s definition as a basis.

Can Evolutionists Be Creationists?

Dr. Coulson is not the only one making young-earth-evolution claims like this, though he is perhaps the boldest. For example, Paul Garner (a UK creationist with a background in geology and his own UK ministry, Biblical Creation Trust, that has written many articles on the topic) points out that even theistic (old-earth) evolutionists can technically be considered creationists if you redefine the word *evolution* largely enough and that creation vs. evolution is a false dichotomy.⁶ Thus, creation vs. evolution in his mind, if not a dichotomy, must be a spectrum. But there *are* two sides here: God’s Word and man’s word. You either agree with God’s Word, or you accept some form of man’s word. Either evolution in the common-descent sense is true, or the Bible is true. They cannot both be true—a dichotomy!

Making matters worse, the word *evolution* has a very strong cultural context. Eighty-one percent of US adults believe human beings evolved over time.⁷ Further, the American public knows that most scientists think evolution from a common ancestor is the best explanation for humankind’s existence. With those facts in mind, what would the average man in the pew think if he hears someone from the church advocating for “evolution”? Keep in mind that the US is ranked well below most western countries in the understanding of science.⁸ Many students last take biology in tenth grade and quickly forget what they learned, particularly if they are not using it in their profession. So for the average Christian accountant or plumber, they get their understanding of science from distant childhood memories, what they hear or read in the news (which is often overarching or downright false for catchy headline material), and the creation scientist who spoke in their church five years ago.

⁶ Paul A. Garner, “Evolving Christian Views on Species” in *Genesis Kinds: Creationism and the Origin of Species*, eds. Todd Charles Wood and Paul A. Garner (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 7–30.

⁷ David Masci, “For Darwin Day, 6 facts about the evolution debate,” Pew Research Center, February 11, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/11/darwin-day/>.

⁸ Drew DeSilver, “U.S. students’ academic achievement still lags that of their peers in many other countries,” Pew Research Center, February 15, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/>.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Consequences of Young-Earth Evolutionism

Now consider what impact a creation scientist making Coulson's claim could have. The average man in the pew vaguely knows that God created, but he is unsure how or when. A creation scientist comes to his church and tells him that creationists can accept evolution. He is confused. He does not see evolution in his [Bible](#) anywhere, but the really smart guy, who claims to be a creationist, thinks evolution is fine. The man in the pew does not know that the creation scientist meant change over time. He only has one context for evolution: all life from a common ancestor. So maybe the two are compatible after all?

There is no good evidence for evolution, something even a few evolutionists acknowledge from time to time.

4

One of three things often happen to the "man in the pew." He might choose to live with the cognitive dissonance, as it has little obvious relevance to his daily life. Alternatively, he might do a quick Google search and stumble on an organization like BioLogos, which proudly proclaims that evolution and the Bible go hand in hand.⁹ If he accepts this, he will almost inevitably follow BioLogos into [open heresy](#). Or the cognitive dissonance might become so strong that the man in the pew gives up on church entirely and abandons the faith.

This article offers a fourth alternative: **reject evolution entirely**. Evolution in the common-ancestry sense is false. There is no good evidence for evolution, something even a few evolutionists acknowledge from time to time. The late evolutionist Lynn Margulis said, generally, of the field of evolutionary biology, "It's wrong like phrenology is wrong. Every major tenet of it is wrong."¹⁰ Claiming that creationists must accept evolution—even as change over time—flies in the face of the evidence, Scripture, and good common sense. While technical terms may be necessary, it is important to present concepts in a way that are clear to the audience. Using technical terms without explanation—terms that are unclear on purpose or that accommodate ideas hostile to Scripture—is harmful to the church laity. The Reformation succeeded in large part because the Bible was translated into the vernacular of the common man, who could then understand that the Roman church had misrepresented what Scripture said. If the clarity and authority of Scripture, beginning in Genesis, is important and [foundational to all doctrine and the gospel itself](#),

⁹ "What is Evolution?" BioLogos, last updated November 4, 2022, <https://biologos.org/common-questions/what-is-evolution>.

¹⁰ John J. Welch, "What's wrong with evolutionary biology?" *Biology & Philosophy* 32 (2017): 263–279, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10539-016-9557-8>.

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

it is equally important to communicate in language that the common man can understand.

Bottom line: Creationists should not be seeming to endorse evolution, given how most people will understand what that term means.

* Featured in *Should Biblical Creation Become More Like Evolution?*

© Answers in Genesis, February 17, 2023. Retrieved February 27, 2023.

<https://answersingenesis.org/young-earth-evolution/can-creationists-accept-evolution/>