



## STATEMENT DA060

### AGE OF CREATION

While all Christians believe that the universe was created by God (Genesis 1:1), opinions vary widely concerning *when* this creation took place. In the seventeenth century Catholic Archbishop James Ussher presented his biblical chronology, which drew upon such genealogies as those listed in Genesis five and eleven, to date the creation at 4004 B. C. Bishop Ussher's chronology was widely accepted by the Christian world for centuries, but today even most of those evangelical scholars who advocate a "young earth" position agree that the biblical genealogies are meant to show line of descent, not strict chronology, and thus may have large gaps in them (this position is explained in-depth in J. Oliver Buswell's *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, and Francis Schaeffer's *No Final Conflict*).

The question of whether the earth is 4.5 billion years old (as modern geology affirms) or roughly 10,000 years old (as some evangelical scientists and theologians are now maintaining) hinges largely on whether the "days" of Genesis chapter one are to be taken as indicating literal 24-hour days or as poetic references to indefinite periods of time. An analysis of the biblical material reveals that the answer to this is not eminently clear, and that some justification can be found for both positions.

Included among the points in favor of the "day-age theory" are the following:

1. In Genesis 2:4, immediately following the account of creation in seven days, we find: "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made earth and heaven." (Emphasis mine) Here the same Hebrew word, "*yom*," is apparently being used in a poetic manner, to indicate the period of time in which God performed His creative work. Since the same author in the same work writing of the same subject uses the word for day in a non-literal sense, a basis is therefore established for interpreting the word in a non-literal sense in chapter one.
2. "Day" is a relative term. A day on earth is a different span of time than a day on any other planet in our solar system. It must be remembered that that which determines our earth days, the sun, was not even functioning until the fourth day of the biblical account (Genesis 1:14-19). Furthermore, we are told in II Peter 3:8 that "...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." It seems altogether conceivable that to God these periods were experienced in a manner analogous to how we in our situation experience 24-hour days.
3. With the above biblical data in mind, we cannot easily dismiss the fact that an overwhelming majority of authorities in the fields of geology, paleontology, biology, etc., are convinced that there is abundant evidence to substantiate a very old earth. Additionally, most of the strongest arguments against the creationist viewpoint currently being made by contemporary science are eliminated when we let go of our insistence upon a 6,000-10,000 year old earth. From the standpoint of presenting an effective apologetic (defense) for the Christian faith, this point must be considered. Why put heavy emphasis on a doctrine that

can stand in the way of some people's arriving at Christian faith when it is not even certain that the biblical data supports the obstacle in question?

On the other hand, there are some definite points in favor of the young earth view, which also need to be considered. Those include:

1. The word, "*yom*" (day), is never used in Scripture with limiting numbers (i.e., "first day) except in a literal sense.
2. References to "evening" and "morning" (such as are used in connection to the successive creation days in Genesis one) are used more than 100 times in the Old Testament, always with a literal meaning.
3. The fourth commandment affirms: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,...For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:9,11). The analogy here between six days of creation and six days of human labor conveys to many people the impression that corresponding periods of time are being alluded to.