

History, Science, and Authority

History of the Bible and history constructed by late 18th and early 19th century scientists conflicted one another. By what authority is each history created by? What is the relationship between history and science?

What is History?

1. The Written Record of People & Events – ie. The book of Kings
2. The Actual People & Events Themselves – ie. David’s flight from Saul

We can all agree that history exists. Something happened in the past.

What is Science?

1. The Study of the Natural World to explain, predict, and control it
2. The Body of Knowledge Itself used to describe the natural world

The human mind is limited in its study and understanding of the natural world. And the natural world is very complex. Scientists use paradigms in order to simplify and explain things. An example is the “plate tectonics” paradigm which has helped scientists explain movement in the earth’s crust. Paradigms can change over time and with new discoveries.

Can you think of a paradigm that has changed in your lifetime or recent past?

What are the Different Types of Science?

1. Operational Science – performs experiments to explain and predict current and future events. ie. Chemistry, Physics, and Biology
2. Historical Science – performs experiments and gathers evidence to determine what happened in the past.
3. Applied Science – the invention of items in technology that rely on how the world operates

Can you see the difference between the different sciences?

Can Science Tell Us Anything?

Science textbooks are constantly being updated. Knowledge is not fixed. How has science changed in the past 50-100 years? How will science change in the next 50-100 years?

Science can tell us only what the minds of humans have learned or speculated at a given time.

What Is Our Ultimate Authority in Terms of Natural History?

“Although science can provide us with limited authority about the world, it can never provide absolute authority....it is always changing its views.” The genealogy of man to Adam and Eve in the Bible gives us a fixed transcript of the history of man. As Christians, we are given a document that presents itself as a complete history of the world from beginning to end. Can you put your trust in the teachings of the Bible to formulate your opinion on history? Is that easy?

Is Creation a Book Like the Bible that can be read by scientists?

“Creation is not a book that can be read.” “Scientists do experiments and make interpretations about the natural world in an attempt to understand it.” These interpretations can be very subjective.

1. **General Revelation** – God reveals Himself through the physical attributes of the creation itself.
Psalm 19 – David says: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” Do you see God in creation?
2. **Special Revelation** – God reveals Himself by telling us through the words of the Bible.
Psalm 19 – David says: “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Can you see God’s revelation in scripture? How does it affect you?

“There is a desire for some to equate General Revelation with the creation itself, giving scientists the job of achieving a better understanding of General Revelation through scientific study.” They then try to interpret Special Revelation through their latest study of General Revelation. “This was the thinking used in the early 19th century to merge views of deep time with the Bible, and then again in the late 19th century to merge evolutionary theory with the Bible.”

Why is this?

Acts 17:22-28 – Paul said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To An Unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

The Athenians had only been exposed to General Revelation, so Paul introduces Special Revelation to them.

Can you see the similar dynamics in our world today?