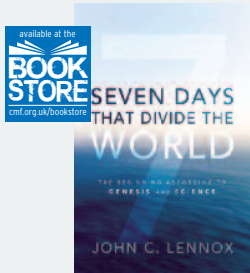


Review

book: *Seven Days that Divide the World*



Seven Days that Divide the World: The beginning according to Genesis and science

John C. Lennox
ISBN: 9780310494607
Zondervan, 2011 £10

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I bought this book in my second year of medical school following a series of lectures on evolution and anthropology. It unnerved me how they revealed my limited knowledge of the subject from a Christian perspective and how the little that I did know, often contradicted what I was being taught. I was afraid of finding out more about the origin of the universe and mankind, fearing it would make me doubt the Bible's account. This appears to be a common experience. Professor Lennox states that his book is 'for the many convinced Christians who are disturbed not only by the controversy but also by the fact that even those who take the Bible seriously do not agree on the interpretation of the creation account.'

I finally read the book in my fifth year, but I wish I had done so earlier as it would have transformed my approach to science during my undergraduate days. I am now utterly convinced that the Genesis account of creation is true and that there must be harmony between it and our scientific understanding; the same mind lies behind them both. Lennox emphasises that we would be 'unwise to ignore science through obscurantism or fear, and to present to the world an image of Christianity that is anti-intellectual. No Christian has anything to fear from true science...' Knowing this now, I pray I will be emboldened to have more conversations with my non-Christian friends about science and the gospel.

The book comprises five chapters and five appendices, which could be read independently if time is limited, but each is extremely helpful for understanding the other. Topics discussed include the principles of biblical interpretation, the

different possible meanings of the Genesis days, the account of the origin of human beings and the relevance of the narrative for us today. The appendices look at the cultural and literary context of Genesis, the convergence of Genesis and science over the fact that space-time has a beginning and theistic evolution. Every section satisfies intellectually and explores concepts deeply and rationally. Lennox has an uncanny ability to answer your questions as they form.

A key illustration throughout is Galileo's theory that the earth moves in space, which in the sixteenth century was in disagreement with the widely held biblical interpretation of a fixed earth. Lennox challenges us 'Why do Christians accept this "new" interpretation, and not still insist on a "literal" understanding of the "pillars of the earth"?...Is it really because we have all compromised, and made Scripture subservient to science?' We need to be humble enough to distinguish between what the Bible says and our interpretations of it using scientific discoveries to help us decide between the possible meanings.

The most important chapter is the last one, which discusses the message of Genesis and what it means for humans. Lennox very honestly writes 'It is one thing to wrestle with the meaning of the days of Genesis; it is another to understand, apply and live the whole message of Genesis. And if we are not doing the latter, I am not sure that the former will profit us much.' I now love the topic of science and faith, but I have been challenged not to lose sight of the fundamental message of Genesis. ■