

How Islam Views the Universal Creation

Wilson: With the progress of science, many questions may arise about the creation of the universe. These questions do not seem to have their answers in the Bible, and sometimes we find some Biblical statements contrary to the scientific knowledge of today. I wonder if we can find answers to some questions in the book of Islam.

The universe now has been proven to be very old. Its age is estimated to be billions of years. It seems that the Bible reduces the age of the universe to just a few thousand years. Does the Holy Qur'an contain any definition of the age of the universe?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an does not define the age of the universe in any way. Science so far is not able to tell exactly when the universe began. The Holy Qur'an had been introduced in a non-scientific age when people were not able to conceive the stretch of time into billions or millions of years. Had the Qur'an stated that the stars were originated billions of years ago, people may have rejected the whole concept of Islam. The Qur'an, therefore, wisely kept silent on this matter. To be true, you do not need to tell all of what you know of truth; you need only to refrain from misinforming the people. Thus, the door was kept open to any scientific theory, so the religious information will not clash with any scientific knowledge.

Wilson: The celestial bodies, the stars, and the planets now are being counted by billions and hundreds of billions. The size of each is tremendous and, sometimes, beyond our imagination. To form such countless bodies, it would take amounts of materials beyond our ability to calculate. Do we have any statements in the Qur'an on the kind of material out of which these bodies were built?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an states that the material out of which these bodies were built was a kind of gas. This is in accordance with the modern theory which says that the celestial bodies were built out of hydrogen gas. From the Holy Qur'an:

“Then He directed Himself to the heaven, and it was a vapor, so He said to it and to the earth: ‘Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly.’ They both said: ‘We come willingly.’” 41:11

Wilson: Does the Holy Qur'an contain any statement about the first material thing that was created?

Chirri: The quoted verse indicates that the vapor or what constitutes the vapor of molecules and atoms was the first material thing which existed in this world.

Wilson: Of what material did the Almighty create life?

Chirri: The Holy Qur'an declares that God has created all living beings out of water:

“Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the Earth were closed up, so We split them, and We made from water everything living? Will they not then believe?” 21:30

“And God has created every walking life out of water, of them that which crawls upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them that which walks upon four. God creates what He pleases. Surely God is Possessor of power over all things.” 24:45

The Order of Creation

Wilson: Does the Qur'an confirm the statement of the Bible which is contained in the Genesis book about the order in the creation of the universe?

Chirri: The Qur'an does not contain such a statement on the order of the creations. However, Muslims do not subscribe to the contents of the first chapter in Genesis book because it shows some discrepancies.

Wilson: Give me some examples of those contradictions to which you refer.

Chirri: Take the following examples:

1. “Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.” Genesis 1:3–5

This statement indicates that the first thing created was the day and night. But we know that day and night would come after the existence of the sun and through its rise and set. However, verse 14 from the same chapter indicates that the sun was created on the fourth day:

“And God said, let there be lights in the firmaments of the heavens to separate the day from the night: and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let there be lights in the firmament of heavens to give light upon the earth, and it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning. A fourth day.” Genesis 1:14–19

This statement indicates that the sun was created on the fourth day, and from here the days should start. This, of course, disagrees with verse 3 which informs us of the start of the day three stages before the formation of the sun.

2. The same chapter states that the vegetation, plants yielding seed, and the fruit trees were created and grown on the third day:

“And God said, ‘Let the Earth put forth vegetables and plant yielding seed and the fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the Earth.’ And it was so. The Earth brought forth vegetation, plants, yielding seed according to their own kinds, and the trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.” Genesis 1:11–13

But we know that none of these vegetation and plants could grow without sun, while the same chapter tells us that the sun was created on the fourth day as mentioned before.

3. The same chapter states that God, on the sixth day, created man in His own image:

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our likeness;...’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:26–27

Muslims believe that God has no image and no form. He is the Infinite Who encompasses the whole universe. He has neither a body, nor is He material, nor do the visions comprehend Him. To think that God has a form of a man, to the Muslims, is degrading to the whole concept of God.

4. Chapter two contradicts the first chapter. The first chapter, as you know, has stated that vegetation and plants and the trees were created on the third day, before the creation of man, who was created on the sixth day. The second chapter tells us that man was created before vegetation and plants:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the Earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens...when no plant of the field was yet in the Earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up – for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the Earth, and there was no man to till the ground...but a mist went up from the Earth and watered the whole face of the ground...then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being... And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there He put the man whom He had formed... And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Genesis 2:4–9

This statement clearly indicates that there was no plant before the creation of man.

There is another point in this statement, namely, that there is a tree of knowledge of good and evil. But we know that knowledge does not grow on trees; it comes through experience and learning.

5. The first chapter has stated that the animal kingdom was created on the fifth day:

“And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the Earth across the firmament of the heavens.’ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind; and God blessed them... And there was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day... And God made the beasts of the Earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind... Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image...’” Genesis 1:20-23

This statement clearly indicates that man was created after the creation of fish, birds, beasts and cattle, but the second chapter indicates that man was created before any of these things:

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ So out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them...” Genesis 2:18-19

6. We find in the third chapter of the Genesis that Eve was deceived by the serpent which persuaded her to eat from the prohibited tree:

“He (the serpent) said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’”... But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be open...’” Genesis 3:1-5

But we know that a serpent is not capable of speaking, deceiving or persuading. A serpent is not endowed with a mental capacity or ability of pronouncing words and carrying on a conversation.

7. In the same chapter we find what indicates the limitation of the knowledge of God, and that He is a walking body, and that Adam and Eve were able to hide themselves from Him:

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ and he said, ‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’...” Genesis 3:8-11

No one can hide himself from God Who is Ever-Present and Who knows everything. God does not need to ask Adam where he is, nor does He need to ask Adam if he had eaten from the tree.

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