

Who do you fear more, God or man?

Alright, what kind of question is this? One that for most people has an answer that seems fairly obvious. In that sense, it's more of a rhetorical question. However (and as usual), I am going to make a larger point.

First of all, I am not talking about "fear" in the sense of being afraid of something or someone. I am referring to the type of fear that is often mentioned in the Bible as it relates to our reverence or respect for God. (You probably guessed that anyway.)



So what's the bigger picture here? Even though most Christians would not hesitate to say they fear God more than man, too often their actions are contrary to this claim.

A major trait of our human nature is that we long to be accepted. We so dearly want approval from those around us, especially from those who have the potential to affect our well-being, for better or for worse. If a friend asks, "Does this sweater look good on me?", you might feel consciously or unconsciously compelled to say, "Yes," even if that's not what you really think. You don't want them to feel bad, nor do you want them upset with you for telling them something they didn't want to hear. We all know that if you are a true friend, you will kindly tell them the truth because you care about them and don't want to see them making bad decisions. That all comes with the risk of temporarily straining your relationship. My own mother was a big "peace-maker" and worked very hard at avoiding tension at almost any cost. She certainly meant well, but one of the results was that I picked up on that trait myself and am still working on improving in that area.

Let's look at how all of this affects the creation versus evolution controversy. In my 33 years of ministry, I have met many Christians who hold certain beliefs, not based on what they understand or can defend but based on what brings them the most acceptance among their peers and academic leaders in the community. They feel that since evolution is believed by the majority of scientists, it must be true. Therefore, it must be incorporated into the interpretation of the Genesis creation account. A pastor once told me he could not have me speak in his church because there were members of the congregation who were graduates of a very prestigious local university, and they would disagree with the traditional view of Genesis (i.e., literal six solar-day creation). He, in essence, was saying he was more concerned with how they might react, rather than sticking with what Scripture actually says. In our conversation, he never once shared anything related to his own personal knowledge or understanding of Scripture. He only referenced other outside influences. It was my impression that he did not want to lose the respect of the academic community in which he lived but believed he would do so if he openly questioned evolution and did not incorporate it into his view of Genesis. I've met other pastors who have a particular view of Genesis but refuse to ever share it publicly, to avoid judgment from their congregation or from the community.

It is becoming increasingly popular to take on various views of Genesis that drastically depart from the straight-forward, historical literary narrative view of creation, including embracing Darwinian

Question of the Month

evolution as God's "process" of creation. People holding these views fit in fairly comfortably with professors at secular universities, even if these professors are atheists. In these instances, both parties believe in virtually the same origins history. It's just that one typically believes that nothing started it all, and the other believes God was the initiator. Most of the remaining details about origins, however, are extremely similar. James 4:4 states, "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Now, I want to be careful and not push this too far. I am not saying that those espousing other views are "enemies of God". I am simply saying that when we are too concerned with what the world thinks of us, we are in danger of compromising our beliefs and standards as a result.

When we stand before God, I'm pretty sure He will not be asking us, "What did you think about the conclusions of scientist so-and-so?" I believe He will only be concerned about how we responded to His inspired Word. (Keep in mind that a huge percentage of the world's population does not have access to scientific publications or even the education to make heads-or-tails of them. How are they ever to arrive at truth if understanding the conclusions of modern scientists is required in order to do so?)

John 12:42 states, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." This is somewhat of a parallel situation. There were those in Jesus' day who believed in Him (to some unknown extent) but would not confess it openly because they were concerned the Pharisees would "kick them out of the club" (i.e., out of the synagogue – a place of high prestige).

The overall lesson here is that we should be more concerned about what Scripture is plainly stating than about the opinions of those around us, whether they be skeptics or even other Christians, (including church leaders).

In the meantime, if you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)