

Creationism

What is the Messianic position on Creationism, or the basic orientation found to Genesis chs. 1-11?

Throughout the broad Messianic community, composing Messianic Judaism, the One Law/One Torah sub-movement, the Two-House sub-movement, and various Hebrew/Hebraic Roots associations—it is fair to say that the considerable majority of Messianic people adhere to some form of Young Earth Creationism (commonly abbreviated as YEC).

Such Messianic, Young Earth proponents believe that Planet Earth (and perhaps the whole universe) is approximately 6,000-7,000 years old, and was created in six literal, 24-hour days. Concurrent with this is a wide and firm adherence to the 6,000-year doctrine. This teaching advocates that there are 6,000 years allocated to human history, with six 1,000-year periods corresponding to the six “days” or *yamim* (יָמִים) of Creation, with a seventh 1,000-year period representing the Sabbath and the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah. With such a seventh 1,000-year period representing the Millennial reign of Yeshua, then the Messiah’s return should occur sometime around “the Biblical year 6,000.”¹ Young Earth Creationists believe that scientific studies are supportive of these beliefs, and commonly believe that the genealogies in Genesis chs. 5 and 11 can be used to calculate the age of the Earth.²

In the past (1960s-2000s), the big issue that has faced the Messianic movement has understandably been the Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth, widely connected for the purposes of Jewish evangelism.³ For the present (2000s-2010s?), the big issue which is facing the Messianic movement is how to approach the nature of Yeshua (Jesus), and evaluating whether He is truly God, or whether He is some sort of a created being.⁴ For the future (late 2010s-into 2020s?), the big issue that will be facing the Messianic movement is going to indeed involve Creationism, Genesis 1-11, human origins, and the age of the universe.⁵ While Young Earth Creationism and the

¹ Consult the FAQ, “6,000 Year Teaching.”

² Consult the FAQ, “Genesis 5, 11 Genealogies.”

³ The Messiahship of Yeshua has been addressed rather sufficiently by Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000); *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 2: Theological Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000); *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 3: Messianic Prophecy Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003); *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 4: New Testament Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 5: Traditional Jewish Objections* (San Francisco, CA: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2007).

Related to this would be the general, broadly evangelical Christian studies: Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992); Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

Some further key resources, which to various degrees are evangelical Christian to Messianic, would include: Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Messianic?* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010); Mitch Glaser, *Isaiah 53 Explained* (New York: Chosen People Productions, 2010); Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel’s King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012); Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012).

⁴ There have been very few substantiative resources composed on the nature of Yeshua, positive of His Divinity, from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Some of the resources one will encounter include the popular books Asher Intrater, *Who Ate Lunch With Abraham?: The appearances of God in the form of a Man in the Hebrew Scriptures* (Peoria, AZ: Intermedia Publishing Group, 2011); Itzhak Shapira, *The Return of the Kosher Pig: The Divine Messiah in Jewish Thought* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2013). From more of a One Law/One Torah perspective is Tim Hegg, *The Messiah: An Introduction to Christology* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2006).

A general overview of the controversies, though with no clear resolution, is present in *The Borough Park Papers Symposium II (April 12-14, 2010): The Deity of Messiah and the Mystery of God* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2012).

⁵ A general overview of these topics is accessible in: J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, eds., *Three Views of Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruexpress, 2001); J. Daryl Charles, ed., *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013); Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, gen. ed., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Charles Halton, ed., *Three Views on Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

6,000-year doctrine have been quite prevalent throughout the broad Messianic movement up to the present, there is going to be much more variance witnessed in the future. The two major alternatives which will be witnessed to Young Earth Creationism in the Messianic community, will either be Old Earth Creationism or Theistic Evolution.

Theistic Evolution mainly advocates that the Genesis 1-11 accounts are to be regarded as widely fictional or mythical, perhaps even repackaged forms of Ancient Near Eastern mythology, and that they only convey a theological or spiritual message, but nothing at all scientific. Adam and Eve, in particular, are not to be regarded as having been two real people, but are instead merely literary characters. From time to time, one will hear reports of a few Messianic Jewish teachers ascribing to Theistic Evolution, believing that the human race came about via a God-directed, Darwinian natural selection.

A third view that has emerged over the past three to four decades (1980s-present), among a wide number of evangelical Christians, has been **Old Earth Creationism** (commonly abbreviated as OEC). This view strongly repudiates the Darwinian theory of evolution for human origins, but does affirm a Big Bang cosmology for the universe. Old Earth Creationism holds to what might be considered an “essentially literal” approach to Genesis chs. 1-2, in that Adam and Eve are believed to be created by Divine fiat **and not by any evolutionary processes**, but it does treat the six *yamim* (יָמִים)⁶ of Creation as being long periods of time, each in the hundreds of millions or several billions of years.

Old Earth Creationism would see a difference between the scientific disciplines of astronomy, cosmology, and geology, versus those of biology and biochemistry. The former disciplines are believed to support the greater universe being approximately 13.2-4 billion years old, and that Planet Earth is around 4.5 billion years old. But the latter disciplines are used to deny any sort of evolutionary origin for the human race. Adam and Eve are affirmed to have been real people, in a real Garden of Eden in the Middle East, having lived some time around 40,000-60,000 years ago, or even 100,000 years ago.⁷

While we have been cautious about the issue of Creationism in our teachings and writings, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics do affirm the tenants of Old Earth Creationism.

⁶ The Hebrew term *yom* (יֹם) primarily means “day of twenty-four hours” (*HALOT*, 1:399), but there are most certainly instances when *yom* means “a period of time” such as a “year” (*HALOT*, 1:400), or simply “division of time” (*BDB*, 398) that may or may not be specified.

⁷ Old Earth Creationism is widely represented and defended in Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, second expanded edition (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004); *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist's Journey through Genesis 1-11* (Covina, CA: Reasons to Believe, 2014); David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006).

Old Earth Creationism is widely refuted in Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of “Progressive Creationism” (Billions of Years) As Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004); Tim Chaffey & Jason Lisle, *Old-Earth Creationism on Trial: The Verdict is In* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).