

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3, Origins of Humanity: 5 Views Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3, Origins of Humanity: 5 Views, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture, "Humanity and Sin, Session 3, The Origin of Humanity, Five Views," explores different perspectives on how humankind came into existence. Drawing from Millard Erickson's Christian Theology, Peterson outlines five views: naturalistic evolution, fiat creationism, deistic evolution, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism. He evaluates these viewpoints, finding naturalistic and deistic evolution incompatible with biblical teachings. Peterson then focuses on the status of Adam and Eve, arguing for their historicity against symbolic interpretations. Finally, he analyzes the creation account in Genesis, contending that it supports a special creation of Adam from dust, thus rejecting theistic evolution's premise of using a pre-existing creature. The lecture concludes by noting a unique intimacy in God's creation of humanity compared to animals, setting the stage for a discussion on the image of God.

**2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Humanity and Sin).**



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3, Origins of Humanity: 5 Views

Briefing Document: The Origin of Humanity - Five Views

Executive Summary:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on the origin of humanity, the third session in his series on the doctrines of humanity and sin. Drawing primarily from Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*, Peterson outlines and evaluates five major views on human origins: naturalistic evolution, fiat creationism (also referred to as young earth creationism), deistic evolution, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism (also referred to as old earth creationism). Peterson categorizes these into evolutionary and creationist perspectives. He then offers his own evaluation, finding naturalistic and deistic evolution incompatible with biblical religion. While acknowledging that sincere Christians hold to fiat, theistic, and progressive creationism, Peterson expresses significant reservations about theistic evolution and cautiously favors progressive creationism while respecting fiat creationism. The lecture then delves into the status of Adam and Eve, arguing for their historicity against symbolic interpretations, and concludes by examining whether Adam was created from a previously existing creature, which Peterson strongly refutes based on his exegesis of Genesis 2.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. Five Views on the Origin of Humanity (Based on Millard Erickson):

- **Naturalistic Evolution:** Accounts for all life, including humanity, through natural processes, explicitly excluding supernaturalism. It is described as "anti-supernaturalistic evolution."
- **Quote:** "Naturalistic evolution is an attempt to account for all forms of life, including humanity, by means of the imminent processes of nature. Supernaturalism is expressly excluded according to naturalistic evolution."
- **Fiat Creationism (Young Earth Creationism):** God directly and virtually instantaneously created everything. Emphasizes both God's direct action and the short timescale of creation. Key advocates mentioned are John Whitcomb and Ken Ham.
- **Quote (Erickson's definition):** "...the view that God, by a direct act, brought into being virtually instantaneously everything that is..."

- **Deistic Evolution:** God planned the creative process and used evolution as the means, but then removed himself from the process. God is referred to as the "creator emeritus."
- **Quote:** "Deistic evolution is the view that God planned the creative process and that he used evolution to accomplish his ends. After God created the first forms, he removed himself from the evolutionary process."
- **Theistic Evolution:** God was involved at the beginning of creation and at key points thereafter, including the supernatural creation of humanity. This view suggests God used a previously existing creature (a higher primate) and infused it with a human soul.
- **Quote:** "According to theistic evolution, God is involved not only at the very beginning of the creative process but also at key points thereafter. God was directly and supernaturally responsible for man's creation. God used a previously existing creature when he made a human being. God created a human soul and infused it into a higher primate."
- **Progressive Creationism (Old Earth Creationism):** God's creative work involved a series of "de novo" (brand new) creative acts, interspersed with periods of evolutionary development within "kinds" (micro-evolution), but rejecting large-scale evolution between kinds (macro-evolution). This view holds that God specially created man from the dust of the earth, not from a pre-existing primate.
- **Quote (Erickson's definition):** "...sees the creative work of God as a combination of a series of de novo, brand new, creative acts, and an imminent or processive operation..."

2. Peterson's Evaluation of the Views:

- **Rejection of Naturalistic and Deistic Evolution:** Peterson deems these incompatible with biblical religion. Naturalistic evolution denies God as creator, while deistic evolution denies His ongoing providence.
- **Quote:** "It is evident to me that views A and C are incompatible with biblical religion. Both naturalistic evolution and deistic evolution are incompatible with the scriptures."
- **Quote:** "Naturalistic evolution is incompatible, for it denies God's being the creator of the heavens and the earth, as the first verse of holy scripture declares."

- **Quote:** "Deistic evolution doesn't deny God being the creator, but it denies his work of providence. The works of God are creation, providence, redemption, and consummation. Affirming one of those and denying others does not make one biblical in one's theology."
- **Reservations about Theistic Evolution:** While acknowledging that sincere Christians hold this view, Peterson expresses disagreement, which he will detail later in the lecture.
- **Cautious Favoring of Progressive Creationism and Respect for Fiat Creationism:** Peterson leans towards progressive creationism (old earth) but extends fellowship to fiat creationists (young earth), emphasizing that the key distinction between creationist and evolutionary views is the "special creation of our first parents," not the age of the earth.
- **Quote:** "I cautiously favor progressive creationism while certainly extending the right hand of fellowship to young earth or fiat creationists. I would say let the debates continue, let the study continue, let us love each other while we continue to try to figure out some of these matters."
- **Quote:** "What makes a creationist from an evolutionist is the special creation of our first parents. And both young Earth and old Earth, or progressive creationism, agree with the special creation of Adam and Eve."

3. The Status of Adam and Eve (Historicity vs. Symbolic Interpretation):

- Peterson addresses the view, exemplified by Emil Brunner, that Adam and Eve were symbolic figures and the creation account a parable.
- **Quote:** "Erickson shows that Emil Brunner, to name one, taught that Adam and Eve were symbolic rather than historical figures. Thus, the creation account of man is a kind of parable rather than a historical record of human beginnings."
- He strongly refutes this view, arguing for the historicity of Adam and Eve based on New Testament witness, particularly:
- **The Genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:** Traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam, "the son of God," implying Luke regarded Adam as a historical person.
- **Quote:** "There's no doubt that Luke regards the people mentioned in this genealogy as historical persons. After all, he is demonstrating the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a genuine human being. So, it does not make sense to regard a figure in a parable... as someone in Jesus' genealogy."

- **Paul's Use of Adam and Eve in 1 Timothy 2:11-15:** Paul's argument for the roles of men and women in the church is grounded in the order of creation ("Adam was formed first, then Eve") and the account of the fall ("Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived"). Peterson argues this argument would lose its force if Adam and Eve were merely fables.
- **Quote:** "In this passage, the apostle Paul argues that women are excluded from teaching and ruling offices in the church. He gives as a basis for his position the facts that, one, Adam was formed first by God and not Eve, and two, Eve was deceived and not Adam. What force would this argument have if Paul were referring to Jewish fables?"
- **The Adam-Christ Parallel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:** Paul draws a parallel between Adam's sin bringing death to all and Christ's righteousness bringing life. Peterson contends this parallel relies on Adam being a historical individual.
- **Quote (Romans 5:18-19):** "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men... For as by the one man's disobedience... the many were made sinners. So also by the one man's obedience... the many will be made righteous."
- **Quote (1 Corinthians 15:21-22):** "For as by a man came death, plainly Adam, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead, plainly Christ. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."
- **Quote:** "How foolish would he have been to ground his case on an unhistorical figure? Would not the effects of the work of Christ have been called into question if the premises of Paul's argument were false?"

4. Was Adam Created from a Previously Existing Creature?

- Peterson addresses this question specifically in relation to the Christian views, noting that only theistic evolution answers affirmatively.
- Based on his exegesis of **Genesis 2:7** ("Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature") and **Genesis 3:19** (God's curse referring to Adam's return to dust), Peterson argues strongly against theistic evolution's claim.
- He highlights the Hebrew word "yatsar" (to form or fashion), suggesting a divine potter forming man from "afar" (dry earth or dust).

- He argues that the concept of returning to dust in Genesis 3:19 cannot logically refer to returning to a previously existing creature.
- He clarifies that while animals are also called "nephesh hayah" (living beings) and have the "breath of life," God's direct in-breathing into Adam suggests a unique animation, not merely the impartation of a soul into a pre-existing primate.
- **Quote (Genesis 2:7 ESV):** "Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."
- **Quote (Genesis 3:19 ESV):** "by the perspiration of your face you will eat food until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
- **Quote:** "Dust here cannot mean a previously existing creature. The man was made from the dust of the earth, and at death, his body decays and returns to dust. Therefore, I conclude that Genesis 2:7 presents man as a special creation of God from the ground. There is not room for theistic evolution here."
- He also emphasizes that Eve's creation from Adam's rib in Genesis 2:20b-22 further supports the idea of special creation, not derivation from a pre-existing animal.
- Peterson concludes that man became a living being *because* of God's breathing into him, not that God breathed a soul into an already living primate. He notes the intimacy of God's interaction with Adam compared to the creation of animals, hinting at the concept of the image of God, which will be addressed in the next lecture.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson provides a comprehensive overview of five major views on the origin of humanity, grounding his analysis in Erickson's framework. He clearly articulates his theological stance, rejecting purely naturalistic and deistic explanations and expressing significant concerns about theistic evolution. He firmly defends the historicity of Adam and Eve based on New Testament scripture and argues persuasively against the notion that Adam was created from a pre-existing creature, emphasizing the special and direct creative act of God in forming humanity from the dust of the earth. The lecture sets the stage for further discussion on the image of God in humanity in the subsequent session.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3, Origins of Humanity: 5 Views

The Origin of Humanity: A Study Guide

Quiz

1. Briefly describe the core difference between creationist and evolutionary views of human origin, according to the source.
2. Explain what fiat creationism asserts about the method and timing of God's creation.
3. How does deistic evolution portray God's involvement in the process of creation after the initial stages?
4. According to theistic evolution, what role did God play in the creation of humanity specifically?
5. What is progressive creationism, and how does it differ from fiat creationism regarding the age of the earth?
6. Why does the author argue that naturalistic evolution is incompatible with biblical religion?
7. What is the author's primary theological objection to deistic evolution?
8. Explain why the author believes the New Testament's references to Adam and Eve support their historicity.
9. According to the author's interpretation of Genesis 2:7, what was the material God used to create Adam, and what was the result of God breathing into him?
10. What distinction does the author draw between God's breathing life into Adam and into the animals, and what does this suggest?

Answer Key

1. The key difference lies in the creation of the first parents. Creationist views assert a special, direct creation of Adam and Eve by God, while evolutionary views propose that humanity arose through evolutionary processes.
2. Fiat creationism posits that God brought everything into existence virtually instantaneously through direct acts of creation. It emphasizes both God's direct action and the short timeframe of creation.

3. Deistic evolution suggests that God planned the creative process and used evolution as the mechanism, but after establishing the initial forms and processes, God removed himself from ongoing intervention.
4. Theistic evolution proposes that God was involved not only at the beginning but also at key points thereafter, including a direct and supernatural act to create humanity, possibly by infusing a soul into a pre-existing primate.
5. Progressive creationism views God's creative work as a series of new, direct creative acts interspersed with periods of evolutionary development. Unlike fiat creationism, it generally accepts an old age for the earth.
6. The author argues that naturalistic evolution is incompatible with the Bible because it expressly excludes supernaturalism, thus denying God as the creator of the heavens and the earth, a foundational declaration in scripture.
7. The author's main theological objection to deistic evolution is that while it acknowledges God as the creator, it denies his ongoing work of providence, which the author considers a major biblical doctrine.
8. The author argues that Paul's use of Adam in genealogies (like Luke 3) and in parallels with Christ (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15) would lose its force and meaning if Adam were merely a symbolic or parabolic figure rather than a historical individual.
9. According to the author, God formed Adam from the dust of the ground (afar). By breathing the breath of life into him, Adam became a living creature (nephesh hayah), meaning he was animated or caused to come alive.
10. The author notes that while God breathed the breath of life into both Adam and the animals, the depiction of God breathing directly into Adam suggests a unique intimacy in the creation of humanity, highlighting a significant difference between humans and the rest of creation.

Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast at least three of the five views on the origin of humanity presented in the source material. In your analysis, discuss the theological implications and the level of scriptural compatibility, according to the author.
2. Critically evaluate the author's reasons for rejecting naturalistic and deistic evolution. Do you find his arguments persuasive? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the significance of the historicity of Adam and Eve, according to the author. How does the author use New Testament passages to support his view?
4. Analyze the author's interpretation of Genesis 2:7 regarding the creation of Adam. How does he use the Hebrew language and other biblical passages to argue against the theistic evolutionary perspective on this point?
5. Explore the implications of the author's observation about the unique intimacy in God's creation of humanity compared to the creation of animals. How does this observation connect to the concept of the image of God, which is mentioned as the topic of the next lecture?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Naturalistic Evolution:** The view that all life, including humanity, arose solely through natural processes, excluding any supernatural intervention.
- **Fiat Creationism:** The belief that God created everything virtually instantaneously through direct, divine acts.
- **Deistic Evolution:** The perspective that God initiated the creative process and used evolution to accomplish his ends, but then withdrew from ongoing involvement.
- **Theistic Evolution:** The view that God was involved in the evolutionary process, not only at the beginning but also at key points, including the supernatural creation of the human soul in a pre-existing creature.
- **Progressive Creationism:** The belief that God created new creatures through a series of distinct acts over time, with periods of evolutionary development occurring between these creative acts. It typically accepts an old-earth view.
- **Providence:** God's active involvement in and governance of the created world.
- **Original Sin:** The doctrine concerning the first sin of humanity (Adam and Eve) and its consequences for the human race.
- **Historicity of Adam and Eve:** The belief that Adam and Eve were real, historical individuals and the first human beings.
- **Nephesh Hayah:** A Hebrew term translated as "living creature" or "living being," used to describe both humans and animals in Genesis.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 3, Origins of Humanity: 5 Views, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Origin of Humanity

1. What are the five main views on the origin of humanity as presented by Millard Erickson and discussed in this session?

Millard Erickson identifies five views on the origin of humanity: naturalistic evolution, fiat creationism, deistic evolution, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism. Naturalistic evolution posits that all life, including humans, arose through natural processes without any supernatural intervention. Fiat creationism asserts that God directly and instantaneously created everything that exists. Deistic evolution suggests that God initiated the creative process and then used evolution to bring about life, subsequently withdrawing from direct involvement. Theistic evolution proposes that God was involved in the initial creation and at key points thereafter, possibly using a pre-existing creature for the physical form of humans while directly creating the soul. Progressive creationism views God's creative work as a series of distinct creative acts interspersed with periods of evolutionary development, with God specially creating humans from dust.

2. What distinguishes creationist views from evolutionary views in the context of this discussion?

The primary distinction between creationist and evolutionary views, according to this session, is not the age of the earth (as fiat and progressive creationism disagree on this) but rather the belief in the special creation of the first parents, Adam and Eve. Creationist views (fiat creationism and progressive creationism) affirm that God directly and uniquely created Adam and Eve, while evolutionary views (naturalistic, deistic, and theistic evolution) propose that humanity arose through evolutionary processes, although they differ on the extent and nature of God's involvement in those processes.

3. Why does the speaker consider naturalistic evolution and deistic evolution incompatible with biblical religion?

The speaker argues that naturalistic evolution is incompatible with the Bible because it denies God as the creator of the heavens and the earth, a foundational assertion in Scripture. Deistic evolution, while acknowledging God as the initial creator, is deemed incompatible because it denies God's ongoing work of providence – his active involvement in sustaining and governing the world after creation. Biblical theology, according to the speaker, encompasses creation, providence, redemption, and consummation, and denying any of these aspects undermines a biblical worldview.

4. What are some criticisms raised against fiat creationism (or young earth creationism)?

Fiat creationism faces criticisms on both scientific and theological grounds. Scientifically, it is seen by some as not taking scientific evidence seriously, particularly regarding the age of the earth. Theologically, some argue that it impugns the veracity of God by suggesting a contradiction between the way God speaks in his Word (as interpreted by young earth creationists) and the way he speaks through the natural world, potentially necessitating an "appearance of age" that could be seen as deceptive.

5. Why does the speaker ultimately reject theistic evolution?

The speaker ultimately rejects theistic evolution based on a literal interpretation of Genesis 2:7, which describes God forming man from the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. The speaker argues that this passage indicates a special creation of humanity directly from inorganic material, without the use of a pre-existing creature. Furthermore, the curse in Genesis 3:19, stating that humans will return to dust from which they were taken, reinforces this view that "dust" cannot be symbolic of a previously existing animal.

6. Why does the speaker emphasize the historical status of Adam and Eve?

The speaker stresses the historical reality of Adam and Eve by referencing New Testament passages such as the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3, Paul's arguments regarding gender roles in 1 Timothy 2, and the Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. In these passages, Adam is presented not as a symbolic figure but as a real individual whose actions had historical consequences for all humanity, mirrored by the actions of the historical figure Jesus Christ. The speaker contends that Paul's arguments would lose their force if Adam were merely a mythical or parabolic character.

7. What is the significance of God breathing the "breath of life" into Adam in Genesis 2:7?

The act of God breathing the "breath of life" into the man formed from dust signifies that Adam became a living being as a direct result of God's action. While animals are also described as having the "breath of life," the direct, face-to-face (so to speak) breathing into Adam highlights an intimacy and specialness in the creation of humanity. The speaker clarifies that this "breath of life" signifies animation, causing Adam to become a living, breathing being, rather than necessarily the immediate impartation of a soul (although humans do possess souls).

8. What is the speaker's personal view on the origin of humanity among the Christian options presented?

While acknowledging that sincere Bible-believing Christians hold to fiat creationism, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism, the speaker states that he cautiously favors progressive creationism. He also emphasizes extending fellowship to those who hold to fiat creationism (young earth creationism) and advocates for continued debate and study on these matters while maintaining Christian love and unity. He explicitly rejects theistic evolution based on his interpretation of the creation account in Genesis.