

*Dear Schuyler,*

*When was hell created?*

The Bible does not answer this question directly. Therefore we need to be sober and circumspect in our answer. Jesus tells us that hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). We know that God created all things in the space of six days. We know too that the devil and his angels fell sometime before the fall of men, and that the devil and his angels were originally good. Many place the creation of angels on the first day of the creation week because they rejoiced at the laying of the earth’s foundation (Job 38:6–7). Since the devil and his angels were originally part of the “very good” creation of God (Gen. 1:31) we must place their fall after that pronouncement of “very good.”

We also know that reprobation (of both men and angels) is an eternal decree. Therefore God created hell as a place of eternal punishment before he created the angels and men who would later fall in his eternal decree. We conclude this because after the sixth day of creation God’s creative work was finished. Beyond those remarks we cannot and should not go.

John Calvin wrote “Some persons grumble that Scripture does not in numerous passages set forth systematically and clearly that fall of the devils, its cause, manner, time and character. But because this has nothing to do with us, it was better not to say anything, or at least to touch upon it lightly, because it did not befit the Holy Spirit to feed our curiosity with empty histories to no effect. And we see that the Lord's purpose was to teach nothing in his sacred oracles except what we should learn to our edification. Therefore, lest we ourselves linger over superfluous matters, let us be content with this brief summary of the nature of devils: they were when first created angels of God, but by degeneration they ruined themselves, and became the instruments of ruin for others” (*Institutes*, Book 1, chapter 14, paragraph 16).

Much more important than these questions of hell is the issue that we not go there. The Bible urges us to believe in Jesus Christ, and assures us that we who believe will not perish. In the way of faith we flee from the wrath to come. And the Bible warns us about that struggle that we have with the devil and his whole dominion. Let us put on the whole armor of God and resist

the devil, and let us not permit genuine curiosity to lead us astray from what is truly important (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Peter 5:8–9; Rev. 12:9–11).

Schuyler