

Traditional Views of the Genesis Days

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A study of the Holy Scriptures reveals neither the age of the universe nor the age of the earth. It does, however, indicate that they are very old. It also restricts how far back in time one might posit the time when Adam and Eve were created.

Most likely, in the inspired writing of the book of Genesis, Moses copied from ancient texts of genealogical records and other sources, and had additional direct revelation from God.

The Gap or Reconstructionist View

1. An imagined history of a pre-Adamic race of humans is inserted between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. At an undefined point in time Satan and the demons supposedly brought about the destruction of that pre-Adamic race and the surface of earth. This scenario allows for an undetermined amount of time back to the origin of the universe and the earth. This theory is backed up by Rotherham's translation of:

❖ "Now the earth **had become** (Heb. *haya*) waste (Heb. *tohu*) and wild (Heb. *bohu*)..." (*Gen. 1:2*).

However, this is **incorrect translation** because the Hebrew term *haya* means "was" and does not mean 'had become.' To legitimately render the translation as **had become** or **became**, 'haya' would need to be followed by the preposition 'la' e.g. "...and man became (Heb. *haya la*) a living being." Also the disjunctive clause at the beginning of verse 2 cannot be translated as if it were relating to the next event in a sequence. If verse 2 were sequential to verse 1 the author would have used a *waw* consecutive followed by a prefixed verbal form and the subject. Almost all translations render it as, "The earth was..."

2. Furthermore, this theory wrongly interprets the Hebrew terms of **tohu and bohu** as meaning that the earth was in chaos. Yet the Hebrew lexicons explain these terms as meaning: **tohu = waste/desolate, bohu = empty, as in the Brown, Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon**. Examples from other parts of the Bible are: "it was waste and empty" (*Jer. 4:23 Darby*); "the line of waste and the plummets of emptiness" (*Isa. 34:11 Darby*). So, a correct translation of these terms gives the picture that the earth was '**an unproductive and uninhabited place**,' rather than as something recently destroyed and in chaos. Whitefield correctly renders Genesis 1:2 as: "*The earth existed unsuitable for human life and empty of human life.*"

3. Although there is a gap between verses 1 and 2 it is not a gap for this imagined destructive event to occur, but simply a shift in emphasis toward the earth. So there is no compelling reason to make *haya, tohu and bohu* mean that the earth was ruined after a pre-Adamic race had been destroyed.

4. From Genesis 1:3 onward the account is seen as a historical and sequential 6x24-hour "days" time for the reconstruction of the surface of the earth. This latter part of the interpretation results from a literalistic superficial reading as with Young Earth Creationism.

Pre-creation Chaos Theory

This was proposed by Bruce Waltke. It has some similar aspects to that of the Gap Theory and so exegetically fails because Waltke's interpretation of the phrase "*without form and void (tohu and bohu)*" (*Gen.1:2*) is incorrectly interpreted as: 'disordered chaos'. Rather, this phrase pictures the earth as 'an unproductive and uninhabited place.' Without the translation 'disordered chaos' the rest of the theory collapses.

The Days of Revelation Theory

P.J. Wiseman proposed that the 6x24-hour "days" were days when God revealed to Moses the details of the creation events. Yet this is very imaginative considering how Genesis One is presented and so it cannot be taken seriously.

Allegorical Interpretation

In contradiction of both Jesus and Paul this interpretation fails to take the characters or events in Genesis 1 and 2 literally. It is often the preferred interpretation of theistic evolutionists.

Traditional and Modern Approaches to the Genesis One Days

Most of the different approaches to the “days” of Genesis One understand that Genesis 1:1; 1:2; 1:3-2:3 and 2:4-22 are separate parts of one creation account (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-7) which was likely written as a passive polemic against the theology of pagan (particularly Canaanite) versions of creation involving more than the One God. Furthermore, from Genesis 1:2 the completion of the creation events is as seen from the perspective of the spirit of God hovering over earth’s oceans.

<i>TRADITIONAL:</i>	1. The Young Earth view	2. The Day-Age view
<i>MODERN LITERARY:</i>	1. The Framework view	2. Analogical Days view
<i>ANCIENT COSMOLOGICAL:</i>	The Functions View	

The Differences in the Treatment of the Creation Days as Material Creation of the Universe

YOUNG EARTH—treats each “day” as **meaning 24 hours** and **referring to 24 hours**.

DAY/AGE—treats each “day” as **meaning ages/epochs** and **referring to** seamless or punctuated **ages/epochs**.

FRAMEWORK—treats each “day” as **meaning 24 hours** but **referring to God’s creation workweek of indeterminate time**.

ANALOGICAL DAYS—treats each “day” as **meaning 24 hours** but **referring to God’s creation workweek of indeterminate time**.

FUNCTIONAL WORLD—treats each “day” as **meaning 24 hours** and **referring to 24 hours**.

The Young Earth View

THIS VIEW PROPOSES:

- That Moses presents a historical, literal *ordinary prose narrative*.
- That Genesis 1:1 is part of Day One.
- That the 6 “days” are taken as literal 24 hour days of God’s creation and which run sequentially.
- That the sun is taken to have been materially created on Day 4.
- That when combined with the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as chronology the conclusion is that the universe came into existence some 6,000 to 10,000 years ago.

Exegetical Difficulties with the 24-Hour Days as Referring to Creation of the Universe within 144 Hours

1. The above conclusions are based on a literalistic superficial reading.

2. *GENESIS 1:1 IS NOT PART OF “DAY ONE”*

The statement “In the **beginning**” cannot be drawn into being part of the 1st Day. This is proven by the fact that:

- a. Here the verb “*created*” is in the perfect tense and denotes something before Day One begins in vs. 3 and is, in fact, a summarizing **introduction** to the period of all 6 “days” because in Hebrew usage the word “beginning” speaks of a period of time rather than a point in time.
- b. The phrase in Genesis 1, “then God said” begins each of the 6 creative “days” and with the first occurrence being in verse 3. This indicates that verse one is either a summarizing statement for all 6 “days” or a separate event.
- c. The Genesis 2:1 statement: “*Thus the heavens and earth were finished,*” is a concluding statement about the work of the 6 “days,” and so showing that this was the subject of verse one.

3. THE FIRST THREE DAYS COULD NOT BE 24-HOUR DAYS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SUN

Because *young earth* proponents claim that the sun, moon and stars were created after 3 Days had passed, this makes it impossible, in their literalistic interpretation, to treat those earlier 3 days as each being of 24 hours duration. This time marking can only operate if the sun existed. This indicates a non-literal referent of the “days.” The *Young-earth* defence is that God either used a surrogate light source or that He was that light source. However, this would be a reading into the text of what is not there. Also if such a surrogate light source were true then it means that God or His surrogate light source were less than perfect and needed to be replaced. If the sun, moon and stars were not materially created until the chronological 4th “day,” this would have left the earth without heat, light, gravity, and the balance of working rotational and orbital features, unless one again appeals to hypothetical miracles which go beyond the Scriptures.

4. THE ACTIVITIES OF GENESIS ONE AND TWO CANNOT LOGICALLY BE FITTED INTO LITERAL 24-HOUR DAYS ONCE MIRACULOUSLY CREATED, ALL GROWTH AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CREATION WERE NATURAL.

DAY 3b – DEMONSTRATES NATURAL GROWTH

❖ “Let the earth **sprout** vegetation: plants **yielding** seed...The earth **brought forth** Vegetation.”

“Sprouting forth” means that it was growing by natural processes. Such growing is not accomplished in 24 hours. Fruit bearing trees require several years to grow to produce fruit. This indicates that the vegetation was not made fully grown and ready to pick. Also note Genesis 2:5 stating: “no plant had yet **sprouted**” and 2:9: “And Yahweh God **caused to grow** every tree.” These are terms of natural activity.

The Expanded Details of Day 6b Demonstrate Events at Natural Speed

If Eve was created within the same 24 hours as Adam, how did he accomplish so much in just 12 hours of daylight e.g. **naming all the animals**, before Eve was brought to him? The *young earth* answer that there was only one animal type for each family, rests on the idea of a subsequent rapid natural **macroevolution** to get all the genera and species that are shown to be on Earth shortly after. Also the 6th day was packed with **more activity than could be accomplished in 24 hours**.

Adam was created before the Garden of Eden was created. So if the planting of Eden, involved natural growth i.e., “And Yahweh God **caused to grow** every tree.” (2:9), then how long was it before Adam was placed in the garden?

- According to verse 18 Adam had time to become lonely. This surely must have taken longer than 24 hours!
- The bringing of animals for Adam to name (possibly 3000 species of land animals and birds) would certainly take longer than 24 hours!
- But Adam is still lonely. Then Eve is created. Adam’s expression of, “*this is at last (‘now at length’ BDB) bone of my bones...*” shows that he was aware of missing something in his life for quite a long time, not a mere 24 hours. The same Hebrew phrase is used in Genesis 30:20 where “Leah said, ‘**now** my husband will dwell with me, because I have born him six sons.’” *In this context this was clearly after some years.*

DAY SEVEN HAS NOT ENDED – IT IS NOT A NORMAL DAY

God’s pattern of a work-week is such that there are 6 daytime periods for work, 6 night-time periods for rest and then on the Seventh Day a time of permanent cessation when all the creation work is completed. This presentation in Genesis of a row of seven “days” is clearly sabbatical because of the inclusion of the Seventh Day.

- As with the anthropomorphisms that the Scriptures use to explain the ways and activities of God, so too the concept of a rest day for God is **anthropomorphic**. The Scriptures make it plain that God does not need to rest. And yet: “...on the seventh day He ceased from labour, and was **refreshed** (Lit. caught His breath).” (*Ex. 31:17*). *This is evidently anthropomorphic.*
- God’s ‘rest day’ does not close with the usual refrain: “There was evening and there was morning” as is common to the other “days.” This shows that it is not completed as a “day” of cessation from creation.
- “For forty years I loathed that generation, I swore in my anger, truly they shall not enter into **my rest**”
(*Ps. 95:10, 11*).

- ❖ “Let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering **His rest**, any one of you may seem to have come short of it....For we who believed **enter that rest**...although **His works were finished from the foundation of the world**...since **it remains for some to enter into it**.....For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that...For *the one who has entered into His rest* has himself also **rested** from his own works, as God did from His” (*Heb. 4:1-11*).

If the reference was to literal 24-hour days then God might have long ago, on each eighth day, **restarted creative activity with regard to the Earth** and there would have been thousands of God’s 144-hour weeks of creation including thousands of single rest days. Yet there is no evidence of any such new creative work. Ehrlich comments: “The production of a new animal species in nature has yet to be documented.”

- Sabbath to the Israelites did not always refer to “days” because the system of Sabbaths included ‘every **seventh year**’ for the land (Lev. 25:2-11 and Neh.10:29-33). If the seventh “day” was 24 hours long the ‘Sabbath resting’ mentioned in Hebrews 4:9,10 would have no meaning for Christians. Yet it says: “*So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has **entered His rest** has himself also rested from his own works, as God did from His.*”
- ❖ “The Jews were persecuting him [*Jesus*] because he was doing these things **on a Sabbath**. But he answered them ‘My Father is working **until now**, and I myself am working’” (*John 5:16, 17*).

So Jesus is saying that God did not rest in absolute terms on the Seventh Day. In fact, he repeatedly declared that for God the Seventh Day was not a cessation from all activity but of a change from His creation of new things. He stated that His Father keeps working even though this very time was part of His Seventh Day rest “until now.” God has ceased from *creation work* but not from doing good—acts of mercy etc. This demonstrates that Jesus did not view the Seventh Day of Genesis as literal. All these facts demonstrate that, at least in reality ***the Seventh Day is a long period of time.*** Therefore, as God’s workweek, the earlier 6 days must be assumed also to be each of *a long period of time.*

NOTE: The New Creation is simply the bringing of the whole creation to its absolute completion so that it fulfils God’s original purpose.

4. LOGICAL TIMING OF EVENTS

The hypothesis of a literal 144-hour week of creation cannot be logically sustained because:

- The land and vegetation existed from Day 3 - Tuesday (Gen. 1:9-13) and yet in the expanded description (Gen. 2) of man’s creation on Day 6 - Friday there was no vegetation because there was no rain.
- The just risen land (1:9) would still be wet in contradiction to the dry conditions described in chapter 2.

5. GOD VIEWS TIME DIFFERENTLY TO US

- ❖ “For, a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night” (*Ps. 90:4*).

This is quoted in 2 Peter 3:8. Yet few believe that the “**Day of the Lord**” is a 24- hour day. Rather the indications in the Bible are of a period of time for many actions to take place, including the 7 bowls of Revelation to be poured out. Furthermore, the measurement of heavenly time is not calibrated according to an earthly chronometer e.g. the rotation of the earth (or any other planetary body) in relation to the sun. So the literal seven 24-hour “days” appear to be used simply as an **analogy** to explain the heavenly reality of the creation.

6. USAGE OF THE WORD ‘DAY’

LITERAL DAYS

The word “day” in Genesis 1:5 means daylight of approximately 12 hours; then later in 1:5 the night is added to the day, thereby making 24 hours. The phrase “*there was evening and there was morning*” refers to the end-points of the **night** of approximately 12 hours. Yet the OT writers marked 24-hour days with the phrase “evening to evening” (*occasionally “morning to morning”*). Yet the Seventh Day, being a direct reference to God’s work-week, is described differently again because no night-time or end is mentioned. So God did not work during the “night” i.e. between the time when “*there was evening and there was morning.*” Nevertheless the “days” presented by Moses are literal 24-hour days because the night is added to the preceding workday. This makes 6 workdays (*and 6 night-times of rest*) plus 1 rest-day for the Israelite work-week. Yet *Young Earth Creationists*

fail to understand from the context of Genesis 1 and 2 that Moses used the literal 24-hour “days” as analogous of God’s work-week. An examination of the earlier points of context indicates that the human work-week is not equivalent to God’s work-week but only analogous to it. If taken literally in *young earth* terms the first three “days” would be pre-solar “days.”

EXODUS 20:11 & 31:17 DO NOT PROVE CREATION WITHIN 144 HOURS

❖ “...because *in* six days Yahweh made (Heb. *asah*) the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that *is* in them, and on the seventh day he rested” (*Ex. 20:11*).

There is no Hebrew word for “**in**” in the text. Furthermore, the word *asah* does not have the same meaning as the word *bara* (create a new thing or function). Rather *asah* has the meaning of ‘to make’ in the sense of ‘to arrange (prepare, complete, or perfect)’ something. So a better rendering of this verse is:

❖ “For six days Yahweh **arranged** (Heb. *asah*) the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them and rested (Heb. *nuakh*) on the seventh day.”

Therefore, this is a reference, not to the creation *ex nihilo*, but rather to the 6 “days” of God’s arranging it as in Genesis 2:4b.

7. MANY SCHOLARS OF THE PAST DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED IN 6x24 HOUR PERIODS
Philo, Josephus, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Lactantius, Victorinus, Methodius, Augustine, Eusebius, Basil, Ambrose, Anselm, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and Isaac Newton.

THERE IS NO BIBLICAL PROOF THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS CREATED 6,000 YEARS AGO

Young Earth Creationists generally appeal to the genealogies of Genesis 5, 10, and 11 to propose that the earth and the universe came into existence 6,000 years ago. However,

- There is no direct temporal connection between these genealogies and the Genesis 1:1 statement that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” even if this statement did concern the material creation, rather than functional creation.
- The Genesis 5, 10, and 11 genealogies were never designed to act as a chronology so as to arrive at a date of 4,004 B.C for the creation of Adam and with the creation of the universe as happening shortly before. Please see STUDY 9 which also demonstrates that there are long gaps between each significant person mentioned in the genealogies.

The Day/Age View

THIS VIEW PROPOSES:

- That Moses presents a historical, literal *ordinary prose narrative*.
- That Genesis 1:1 is a separate event earlier than the 6 days, so that the sun/moon/stars/earth are taken to have been created before the beginning of the Days in verse 3.
- That the 6 “days” are taken to be of literal long ages or eras of thousands of years long.
- That the 6 “days” run sequentially and chronologically.
- That on Day 4 a cosmic cloud is removed from between the sun and the earth so that the sun’s rays reach the earth’s surface.
- That the Genesis account must fit with up to date scientific information (macro-evolution is usually excluded).
- That the universe is billions of years old according to scientists.
- That mankind’s existence goes back 40,000 years in line with current scientific dating. However, by incorrect use (as a chronology) of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies some allow for mankind to have existed from only 6,000 years ago.

- That because Day One in Genesis 1:3 is understood as not being about the creation of light, the Hugh Ross team propose that, on Day 4, when verse 16 says: “*And God had made (asah) the two great lights...and the stars,*” it is a **parenthetical reference** back to 1:1; and so is a background statement to show the new function of visibility to an observer on earth of these lights. Therefore, it is not about the creation of the Sun, the moon and the stars which occurred earlier in 1:1.

The Exegetical Difficulty with the Day/Age View

24-HOUR DAYS - BUT REFERRING TO GOD’S DAYS

- It is faulty semantics to read the “days” as of ‘unspecified length’ or of 1,000 or 7,000 years or anything other than connected to the 24-hour cycle of days. Whenever, in the Bible, “day” has the meaning of ‘unspecified length’, it has a qualifying genitive, such as “day of Yahweh” or “day of wrath.” Yet no such qualifier exists here in Genesis 1. Even the Genesis 2:4 statement of “*in the day that Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens*” simply means “when *Yahweh God made...*” as in many translations.
- In his writings, Moses’ use of the Hebrew word יום (yom) is accompanied by **numbers** 119 times. On each occasion literal days are meant. This is true also, for the 357 times in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. So whenever *yom* is used **with a numerical adjective, it refers to a literal day.**
- Of the 2,304 occurrences of the word *yom* in the Hebrew Scriptures the overwhelming majority mean a 24-hour day or the hours of daylight. The temporal significance of the word *yom* is seen in the fact that on Day One the literal time of **daylight** is called “*day.*” Although the semantic field for the word *yom* allows for ‘a long period of time’ (see Isa. 61:2, or the idiom in Gen. 2:4, “in the day,” that is, “when”) yet in the specific context of Genesis One such a definition would be excluded. Furthermore, Genesis One uses “day,” “night,” “morning,” “evening,” “years,” and “seasons.” Consistency would require sorting out how all these terms could possibly be used to express ‘ages.’
- Genesis 1:5 gives us God’s definition of the word “day” when it says “*God called the light Day.*” This definition of day as being of around 12 hours shows that all the time-periods in chapter 1 are within the normal time-scales by which humans operate.

These key facts reduce the semantic field for the use of ‘yom’ in Genesis One to only literal 24-hour days. In ‘Exegetical Fallacies’ D. A. Carson speaks of the fallacy of: *Unwarranted adoption of an expanded semantic field.* Yet, this is what Day/Age proponents have done.

The exegetical evidence suggests that the word “day” in this chapter refers to a literal twenty-four hour day.

NOTE: A faulty Young Earth argument against the Day/Age view is that if Moses had not written with normal human time-scale “days” in mind he would not have used the word *yom* (day), but rather he would have used the word *olam* (age). However, the lexicons show that only in the post-biblical writings did *olam* refer to a long age.

Conclusions

The **Young Earth Creation Model** seems feasible from a surface reading of Genesis One but proves to be a literalistic reading that produces a number of contradictions within that chapter. Many other biblical factors show this to be a significantly flawed model – particularly the events of Genesis Two which clearly show the logical impossibility of God’s actual creative “days” as being of 24 hours each. Furthermore, the Seventh Day has not yet ended and therefore cannot be a 24-hour day. Proponents of the model are then forced to resort to inventive supernatural happenings that are nowhere described in the Scriptures. The scientific problems with this view are examined in STUDY 10, “NATURES RECORD IN THE DATING OF CREATION.”

The **Day/Age Model**, whilst having much to commend it, fails to take into account the fact that the framework of “days” must be taken as literal 24-hour days rather than literal ages.

In spite of the many good features in all of these approaches their exegetical failures make them unfit as providing a correct understanding of the Genesis “days.” So the next study will examine three of the more recently proposed approaches to the Days of Creation. However, one must bear in mind that all theological systems and interpretations should be held as provisional.