



"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

AUGUST 2006

What's Happening?

Seattle Radio

Dr. Hugh Ross will be interviewed on "Living Christian with Michelle Mendoza" on KCIS, AM 630 in the Seattle and surrounding area, at 12:30-40 P.M., August 24th. The topic of the discussion will be: RTB's Testable Theory of Creation and RTB's 20th Anniversary.

Book Release Party

The Discovery Institute will host a book release party for Jonathan Well's new book, "The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design," September 7, 4:30 to 6:00 P.M. at the Rainier Square Atrium in Seattle.

We Do Presentations

If your church or group is looking for a speaker, the Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics ranging from the scientific evidences pointing to God, to the age of the earth debate. Contact us for more information at seattle@reasons.org.

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Old Earth Creationism: Setting the Record Straight

JON W. GREENE

Note: This article will appear in two parts, this month and next.

Controversy abounds in conservative evangelical circles regarding the age of the earth and the universe. This controversy stems from conflicting views on the Genesis creation days, particularly those of the young-earth and old-earth creation models.¹ Young-earth creationism (a.k.a. the Calendar-Day or Solar-Day view) interprets the creation "days" as 24-hour periods, while old-earth creationism (a.k.a. Progressive Creationism or Day-Age view) interprets the "days" as long ages or epochs of time. As a point of clarification, the Old Earth Creationism (OEC) described in this paper posits that God created progressively over long periods or "day-ages" of time and adamantly rejects "theistic evolution" (Theistic evolution suggests God used evolutionary processes to create life).



The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to address several misconceptions and mischaracterizations regarding old earth creationism (OEC); and second, to demonstrate why many Bible-believing evangelicals believe OEC is true to Scripture and worthy of consideration. The major areas of discussion will include:

- Major Tenets of Old Earth Creationism
- Historical Basis of OEC
- Dating the Creation
- Scriptural and Exegetical Basis for Long Creation Days
- The Three Creation *Bara*'s
- Important Distinctions between Young Earth Creationism (YEC) and OEC
- Why this is important in the church today

The age-of-the-earth controversy has parallels with the Galileo controversy of the 1500s, which centered on geocentrism vs. heliocentrism. The 16th century Church interpreted Scripture as meaning the Earth was unmovable (Psalm 93:1) and the sun revolved around planet Earth (Ecclesiastes 1:4-5). The Church accused Galileo of being a heretic, because his views challenged church dogma. Like the Galileo

controversy, today's conflict involves the interpretation of Scripture, not Scripture itself. The Bible is inerrant, but our interpretations of Scripture are not. When there is apparent conflict between God's world (the record of nature) and God's Word (the Bible), we need to carefully examine our interpretations of both. Since God is the author of both general and special revelation they must agree.

As we consider various creationist perspectives, it might be wise to heed the words of John Ankerberg: "The age of the earth is not a test for orthodoxy . . . The fact of Creation is more important than the time of Creation. Their common enemy [naturalism] is a more significant focus than their intramural differences." Similarly, John Mark Reynolds and Paul Nelson state the age of the earth is "much less important" than the problem of naturalism and suggest young-earth and old-earth creationists should be allies against theistic naturalism and secular naturalism.²

MAJOR TENETS OF OLD EARTH CREATIONISM (OEC)

In popular Christian lay publications, books, presentations, and web-sites, OEC is frequently characterized as being "anti-Biblical," "non-literal," or "accommodating to science." Those who embrace the OEC view are labeled as "Christian evolutionists" or "compromisers." Sometimes the term "uniformitarian" is applied to OEC, a term that suggests gradual, on-going, natural processes without miraculous supernatural intervention.

In truth, OECs regard the Genesis creation account as a factual narrative account of what God did—a literal historic record of God's fiat creation, not some allegorical story. Like YECs, OECs reject macro-evolution and theistic evolution. Thus, the conflict between young-earth and old-earth creationism is not an issue of the "who" or "how" of Genesis, but a question of "when" God created.

To set the record straight, here are the basic tenets of OEC:

1. God transcendentally created (*bara*) "the heavens and the earth"—the universe and everything within it—long ages ago. God spoke the universe into existence *ex nihilo* from no previously existing matter. All matter, energy, space, and time were created by God. Creation was not the result of naturalistic processes.
2. The Genesis creation days are long periods of time. The Hebrew word for "day" (*yôm*) has several literal meanings, one of which is "long age or epoch of time." (Some incorrectly equate OEC belief in long day-ages with a belief in evolution, which is totally untrue and without warrant.)
3. All life, from the most simple life-forms to the most complex—all plants, animals, and Adam & Eve—are special fiat creations of God, created progressively over long ages of time. Microevolution may account for minor variations within species, but species did not "evolve" from another.
4. Evolution as commonly taught ("molecules to monkeys to man" macroevolution) is untrue. Life did not begin by naturalistic, evolutionary processes in some "primordial soup," as is taught in virtually all biology textbooks. Nor did God use naturalistic processes to bring about life and humanity (known as "theistic evolution"). Similarities between species can be attributed to a common Designer, not evolution.

Continued on page 4

In the NEWS...

[Unlocking the Mystery of the Universe](#)

This informative, 3-part Breakpoint series by Regis Nicoll provides an overview of the history of modern cosmology. Part one, "Toward a Theory of Everything," discusses of Einstein's theories. Go to: <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=2672>. Part two, "Fits and Starts to a Final Theory," discusses the birth of quantum theory. Go to: <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=2759>. Part three, "Got the World on a String," discusses string theory. Go to: <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=2810>.

[Peer-Reviewed ID Publications](#)

Critics of ID made the claim that ID advocates do not publish their works in peer-reviewed scientific journals. This Discovery Institute article lists numerous ID articles that have. A great resource. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=2640&program=CSC%20-%20Scientific%20Research%20and%20Scholarship%20-%20Science>.

[Censoring Science](#)

This Breakpoint commentary by Chuck Colson discusses the consequences of the Kansas primary election that eliminated school board candidates who favored the teaching of the controversy over evolution. The bottom line is it will keep kids in the dark. Go to: http://breakpoint.org/listing_article.asp?ID=2766.

[A Mathematician's View of Evolution](#)

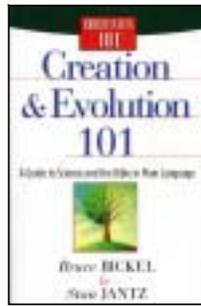
This Discovery Institute feature links to an article by mathematician Granville Sewell. In it, Sewell explains that Michael Behe's arguments against neo-Darwinism from irreducible complexity are supported by mathematics and the quantitative sciences, especially when applied to the origin of new genetic information. Go to: <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=3640&program=CSC%20-%20Scientific%20Research%20and%20Scholarship%20-%20Science>.

Book Reviews

Creation & Evolution 101

Bruce Bickel & Stan Jantz
Harvest House, 2003

Reviewer: Mike Brown



Bruce and Stan are known for their easy-to-read, humorous books on Christian topics. My first exposure to them was the book *Bruce & Stan's Guide to the Bible*. This book is for older readers and is 284 pages long. It is part of their "Christianity 101" series.

To quote Christianbook.com:

"Simple, yet comprehensive, this witty guide offers insights on the theory of evolution, including scientific evidence indicating intelligent design; the Christian approach to science; and Genesis and the latest findings. Learn to think clearly about the facts and opinions of science and they can influence our understanding of the Bible."

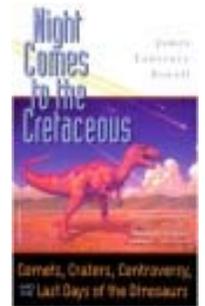
If you are a used-book bookstore browser, it was originally published under the title: *Bruce & Stan's Guide to How it all Began*. In the book, they quote Dr. Ross on no less than fifteen pages? On page 58, they refer to him as a genius who does a great job of explaining how science points to God. Their science advisor on the book is a member of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), a respected association of Christians in the sciences.

Because so many people do not have science backgrounds, and since it is so hard to get people to sit down and read serious books, I am happy to see a series like this. These are excellent materials to get into the hands of youth pastors and their young people. The final chapter is particularly good, titled "Your Life Depends on What You Decide." It reminds us that our decisions have consequences and the issue of creation and evolution has eternal consequences.

Night Comes to the Cretaceous

James Lawrence Powell
Harvest Books, 1999

Reviewer: Fred Spann



Night Comes to the Cretaceous is a fascinating and very readable account of the struggle within the scientific community over the asteroid-impact theory explanation for the extinction of the dinosaurs and 70 percent of all species 65 million years ago. The theory, advanced by a retired Nobel prize winning Physicist, Luis Alvarez, and his son Walter in 1980, challenged established geological dogma.

In the book, Powell provides a lucid and objective account of science at work, including the passionate struggles, personal conflicts, setbacks and victories which transformed geological science. Powell's story of the claim for an extraterrestrial extinction cause draws on many different fields of science: vertebrate paleontology, micro-paleontology, evolutionary biology, rare-metal chemistry, astronomy, magnetism, statistics, geologic age dating and physics of nuclear explosions. To a novice in these fields, his scientific explanations are understandable and enlightening.

James Powell is president and director of the Los Angeles county Museum of Natural History and was a professor of geology at Oberlin College for 20 years. From this perspective he takes the reader into the inner workings of the scientific community in a captivating solution to a mystery. The book of 221 pages is well researched and documented.

Powell does not present a faith perspective in this book. The value of this book for Christian apologist lies in the insight into the working of the scientific process. The process works, in spite of passionate and flawed human beings. The Christian can trust the scientific process when faithfully applied. It is also fascinating to gain new understanding into the ways God has acted in the history of our planet to prepare a place that is just right for the crown of his creative activity.

- The earth's geologic features formed over long time periods, through both gradual processes (plate tectonics, continental drift, mountain building, sedimentary rock formation, fossil deposition, and coal/oil/gas/diamond formation, etc.) and catastrophic processes (volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and asteroid & meteor impact events).
- There is overwhelming evidence the earth is very old. These evidences come from many independent lines of research and cannot be attributed to naturalistic bias in the scientific community.
- God's general revelation (His world) is consistent with God's special revelation (His Word). Both are revelations from God and communicate a consistent message. As Romans 1:19-20 indicates, the creation is a trustworthy revelation that communicates truth about the Creator.

HISTORICAL BASIS OF OEC

Old earth creationism is not a new concept conceived in modern times to make Scripture align with modern science. OEC predates Darwin and big bang cosmology by centuries and is not an accommodation to mainstream science.

Early Church Fathers

Belief in an ancient earth has a long history, starting in the early church. Though some church fathers interpreted the days (*yôm*) of creation as 24-hour days, others explicitly endorsed six 1,000-year time periods for the Genesis creation days. This includes such notable figures as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Lactantius, Victorinus, and Methodius of Olympus (2nd and 3rd century). Basil and Ambrose (4th century) sometimes wrote of 24-hour days, but often in the same passages wrote of "ages."

Here are a few examples of theologians from the first millenium who questioned the belief that the Genesis creation days were 24-hour periods.

- Cyprian (250 AD) wrote: "The first seven days in the divine arrangement contain seven thousand years."³
- Augustine (354-430 AD) in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* wrote, "But at least we know that it [the Genesis creation day] is different from the ordinary day with which we are familiar."⁴ Augustine generally believed in an instantaneous creation.
- Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 AD) observed that "the 'days' of Moses' account . . . are not to be equated with the days in which we live."⁵

Some point out that none of the early church fathers spoke of the creation "days" as being millions or billions of years old. However, this was simply beyond the scientific understanding of the day. It is significant that many church fathers believed the creation "days" were not 24-hour days. The early church was open to various interpretations, and no one view was considered orthodox.

Jewish Commentaries on the Pentateuch and Talmud

Jewish Rabbi contemporaries of the church fathers were also divided on the length of the creation days. A number explicitly endorsed the view that the creation days were long periods of time. For example, Onkelos (2nd century), Rashi (1040-1105 AD), Maimonides (1135-1204 AD), and Nahmanides (1194-1270 AD) all clearly

Apologetic TOOLS

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Join Hugh Ross and Fuz Rana each Tuesday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (PT), for webcast about how science agrees with the Bible. Listen live and/or download past broadcasts. Go to the RTB website and click on "Get Tuned In."



Daily Discoveries

RTB posts a new scientific discovery on their website each day that supports the RTB creation model. You can also view past discoveries since 2003. For an archive of discoveries, go to the website and click on "Today's New Reason."



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believed in an old earth.⁶ These conservative Jewish scholars were in a good position to understand the meaning of the original Hebrew text.

Prominent 19th and 20th Century Theologians

The 19th century Princetonians, strong upholders of Reformed orthodoxy, expressed broad views of Genesis 1. Some understood the days as ordinary 24-hour days; others were open to interpreting the days as long ages of time.

- Three stalwarts of the faith, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield wrote extensively on creation, and none regarded “the six 24 hour day view of creation as exegetically required by a careful reading of Genesis 1.”⁷
- J. Gresham Machen, founder of Westminster Theological Seminary, wrote: “It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time.”⁸
- Professor Edward J. Young, often regarded as the “epitome of conservative exegetical orthodoxy in this matter,” held that a chronological sequence is taught by Genesis 1, but made abundantly clear that chronological sequence should not be equated with or confused with chronological duration: “But then there arises the question as to the length of these days. That is a question which is difficult to answer. Indications are not lacking that they may have been longer than the days we now know, but the Scripture itself does not speak as clearly as one might like.”⁹

Noted Christian Leaders and Scholars

Many other noted scholars and theologians have also supported the “day-age” interpretation of the Genesis creation days, including O.T. Allis, E.J. Young, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., R. Laird Harris, Francis Schaeffer, William G.T. Shedd, and James Montgomery Boice.¹⁰ It should be noted that Boice served as Chairman of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, which met from 1978 to 1988 and produced “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.” Boice devoted his life to a proper interpretation of the Bible.

- James Montgomery Boice: “[Young earth] creationists insist that the days cover a literal 24 hours, but this is not necessarily the case. Sometimes the word ‘day’ is used with a broader meaning . . . it can mean a period of indefinite duration.”¹¹
- R.A. Torrey: “Anyone who is at all familiar with the Bible and the way the Bible uses words, knows that the use of the word ‘day’ is not limited to twenty-four hours. It is frequently used to denote a period of entirely undefined length . . . There is

no necessity whatsoever for interpreting the days of Genesis 1 as solar days of twenty-four hours length.”¹² (Torrey founded Talbot Seminary and served as Editor of *The Fundamentals*, published in the early 1900s.)

Others who support the OEC view of the days of Genesis include Walter Kaiser (President, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), Norman Geisler (President, Southern Evangelical Seminary), William Lane Craig (Talbot School of Theology), J.P. Moreland (Talbot School of Theology), the late Gleason Archer (Professor of Semitic languages and one of 50 scholars selected for the NASB translation; also a translator for the NIV, and a participant in the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy), Jack Hayford (President, Four Square Church), the late Bill Bright (Founder, Campus Crusade for Christ), Greg Koukl (President, Stand to Reason Ministries), Lee Strobel, Dallas Willard, C. John Collins, John Ankerberg, Chuck Colson, Josh McDowell, John Rea, and Nancy Pearcey. And the list goes on and on.

The point is this: respected scholars, theologians, and conservative evangelicals have embraced a variety of views over the centuries, with a firm belief in upholding inerrancy and honoring a literal interpretation of Scripture. Never has the age of the earth been considered an essential bedrock doctrine of Christianity. It is only in the past few decades that some young-earth believers have tried to position it as a salvation issue, which it is not.

DATING THE CREATION

Regarding the age of creation, and particularly the age of the earth, young-earth advocates exclaim, “Who knows how long ago it was? No one was there, so I think it’s just guesswork based on speculation.”

Considerable evidence suggests an earth older than 10,000 years. Radiometric dating of earth’s rocks by over 40 different dating techniques, each based on a different radioactive isotope, all reveal a very old earth.¹³ In addition, numerous non-radiometric methods are in agreement and serve as independent verification of radiometric methods. The multitude of dating methods (both radiometric and non-radiometric) present a consistent picture, suggesting that earth’s age is best measured in millions or billions of years—not thousands.¹⁴ The evidence for an old earth is overwhelming and incontrovertible.

The Bible is largely silent about the date of creation. Scripture neither speaks of a 6,000 to 10,000 year old earth nor a 4.5 billion year old earth. It merely states, the heavens and the earth were created “in the beginning.” So where did the concept of a 6,000 to 10,000 year-old earth come from? The chronologies of Ussher and Lightfoot.

In the mid-1600s, Irish Archbishop James Ussher and Cambridge

theologian John Lightfoot studied the genealogies in Genesis 5 & 11 and concluded that God had created Adam & Eve in 4004 BC. This date was “etched in stone,” and even found its way into the chapter headings of the early King James Bible.

Just as the Apocryphal books grew in stature when Jerome included them as an historical appendix in his Latin Vulgate, the KJV’s inclusion of headings supporting this interpretation essentially canonized this interpretation of Genesis. The Ussher/Lightfoot genealogies not only determined Adam’s birthday (determined by Lightfoot to be October 23, 4004 BC at 9:00AM), but also imposed the 4004 BC date onto the creation of “the heavens and the earth” in Genesis 1. This interpretation from these theologians guided the church’s understanding of creation’s timeframe for centuries.

Since the days of Ussher and Lightfoot, however, Biblical scholarship has advanced. Most scholars now recognize that the Ussher/Lightfoot conclusions, based on the Genesis genealogies, were flawed in at least two ways:

- Biblical Hebrew has a very limited vocabulary, so that “father” (*‘ab*) can not only mean father, but also grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great grandfather or ancestor; and “son” (*ben*) can mean son, grandson, great-grandson, or descendent. (Genesis 5:3-32, 11:10-32)
- In contrast to western genealogies that presume meticulously complete records, ancient Hebrew genealogies included just heroes or particularly notable descendents, not every single individual. Ryrie agrees: “It is likely, however, that the genealogy is selective, resulting in gaps in the list and pushing the date of creation further back.”¹⁵

Thus, the Genesis genealogies provide highlights of the history of God’s people, not a complete chronology. This makes it impossible to use the genealogies as an absolute basis for calculating the date of creation, since these gaps could represent thousands of years.

Though Biblical and scientific evidence is missing, creation 6,000 to 10,000 years ago is still believed today by many Christians, based on the Ussher/Lightfoot genealogies. With virtual unanimity, most YEC apologists (e.g., Ken Ham, Jason Lisle, Mike Riddle, and Jason Carlson, to name a few) emphatically state that the Genesis genealogies are complete and without gaps. Other scholars disagree. For example, Wayne Grudem, research professor of Bible and theology and author of *Systematic Theology*, writes:

“[N]o evangelical today would hold that the world was created 4004 BC. Yet that date was once widely believed to be the date of the creation because of the writings of Irish Archbishop James Ussher . . . Today it is widely acknowledged that the Bible does not tell us the precise date of the creation of the earth or of the human race.”¹⁶

Likewise, Christian philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer noted:

“Before the turn of the century, Professor William Greene at Princeton Theological Seminary and Professor Benjamin B. Warfield following him maintained that the genealogies in Genesis should not be taken as chronology . . . I think that the understanding that these genealogies are not a chronology is obvious from Scripture itself . . . Several passages make it obvious that the writers knew the chronology but that they still deliberately omitted several steps in the genealogy. There is no doubt that we have a tremendous gap in years and in intervening generations.”¹⁷

For those interested in exploring the Genesis genealogies further, several authoritative references provide more complete information on this topic.¹⁸

SCRIPTURAL AND EXEGETICAL BASIS FOR LONG “DAYS”

Honoring and upholding the authority of Scripture is of primary importance to both young-earth and old-earth creationists. Though both believe in a literal Genesis creation account, their interpretations of Scripture vary.

Many Christians advocate a “clear, plain, normal reading of the text.” Unfortunately, it may not be quite as simple as that. For instance, the meaning intended by the Genesis author may be somewhat obscured by the chain of translation—from the original Hebrew, to the Greek Septuagint, to the Latin Vulgate, to the English Wycliffe Bible, to the Tyndale translation, to the King James Version, and now to the later translations such as the NIV, NASB, and the ESV. Also, English and Hebrew are fundamentally different languages. English expresses when an event takes place (past, present, or future tenses). Biblical Hebrew expresses a state of action—whether an action is complete (perfect “tense”) or incomplete (imperfect “tense”).

Hebrew scholars acknowledge that the Hebrew word for “day” (*yôm*) has several *literal* meanings: daylight, day, time, moment, or long era of time.¹⁹ The challenge in reading Genesis Chapter 1 is to determine which definition of *yôm*, coupled with Hebrew syntax, best conveys God’s intended meaning of the creation account. Through Moses, did God intend to convey a *yôm* of 24 hours or a *yôm* of long ages? It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive defense of the old-earth interpretation of Genesis. However, here are a few observations that may shed some light on this issue.

Day (*yôm*) With a Number

Some claim that *yôm* attached to a number (a cardinal—“one, two, three,” etc. or an ordinal—“first, second, third,” etc.) always, without exception, refers to a 24-hour period. Other Bible scholars dispute

that claim. According to noted Hebrew scholar Gleason L. Archer, the ordinal simply defines a symbolic unit of time. He states, “[I]t serves as no real evidence for a literal 24 hour day concept on the part of the Biblical author.” He also notes that the days of creation do not bear a definite article in the Hebrew. (The translation, “*the* first day,” “*the* second day,” etc. is in error.) Archer states, “In Hebrew prose of this genre, the definite article was generally used where the noun was intended to be definite . . . Thus they [“days”] are well adapted to a sequential pattern, rather than to strictly delimited units of time.”²⁰

Young earth creationists John and Henry Morris and others suggest that the “days in Genesis 1 must be ordinary days, because whenever the word ‘day’ has a number with it in the Old Testament, it is an ordinary day.” Hebrew scholar C. John Collins, Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary (PhD in Hebrew linguistics), has examined this claim and states, “This argument is unsound, and uses the statistics in an unsound manner.”²¹

“Day” (*yôm*) used with a number in Genesis 1 does not restrict its meaning to a 24-hour day. Hosea 6:2 provides an example of *yôm* being used with an ordinal and not referring to a 24-hour period of time: “*He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day,*” referring to Israel’s ultimate restoration some hundreds or thousands of years in the future. Also Zechariah 14:7, describing the Day of the Lord, contains *yôm echad* (translated “unique day”), which is identical to *yôm echad* of Genesis 1:5 (translated “one day”). The context of Zechariah 14:7 seems to indicate the *yôm echad* will be a period of time spanning at least one summer and one winter (Zechariah 14:8).

Evening (‘ereb) and Morning (boqer)

John Morris and other YEC advocates suggest that *yôm* modified by “evening” (‘ereb) and “morning” (*boqer*) can only mean a 24-hour day.²² However, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* contests this understanding of *yôm*:

“The reference here is to a *day of God*, and not to an ordinary day bounded by minutes and hours. The beginning of each act of creation is called morning, and the close of that specific divine act is called evening.”²³

Collins suggests that Morris’s claim is “utter nonsense” and that “there is no ‘rule’ in Hebrew that would make this refer to a ‘literal’ day.”²⁴ In either interpretation—whether *yôm* refers to a 24-hour period or an epoch of time—“evening” and “morning” simply bracket that period of time.

Textual Support for Long Creation Days

Based on the events described in Genesis 1 & 2, some suggest that *yôm* is more correctly translated as “time” rather than “day.” For example, Genesis 1:11-12 (creation day 3), Genesis 1:14-18 (creation

day 4), and Genesis 1:24-30 (creation day 6) all contain completed actions that likely did not take place within 24 hours.

Creation Day 3

Genesis 1:11-12 (NASB): *Then God said, “Let the earth sprout [dasha] vegetation, plants yielding seed [zera`], and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth,” and it was so. And the earth brought forth [yatsa`] vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.*

Textual support for Day 3 being a long time period comes from two considerations: First, the Hebrew verb “shall bring forth” (regarding the appearance of vegetation) is a command in the Hiphil verb form and indicates that the land is to be the agent causing the action of sprouting. The verb form is imperfect, but because of the “waw” prefix, the verb represents perfect completed action, meaning that the grass had produced seed and the fruit trees had yielded fruit, processes which require a considerable length of time.

²⁵ The completion of the growth cycles required to produce seed and fruit requires several years, not just a single 24-hour day.

Second, verse 11 ends with the consonantal Hebrew phrase translated as “and it was so.” This phrase appears nine times in the Bible, six of which are in Genesis 1. The phrase is used to indicate the completion of the creative commands. The phrase consists of two words, the “waw-consecutive” of the imperfect verb “to be,” and the word translated “so.” The phrase means completed action, but does not imply immediate action. For example, the identical Hebrew phrase translated “and it came to pass” in 2 Kings 15:12 describes events that took place over a period of four generations.²⁶

The Day 3 text does not say God created (*bara*) fully-grown plants. Rather, it states God commanded plants “sprout” from the land, suggesting normal growth processes. “A completion within 24 hours would require the meanings of the words describing the actions could not represent their usual meanings. There is no textual evidence to indicate anything but the usual meanings.”²⁷ Trying to fit the natural growth events (*dasha*, *zera`*, *yatsa`*) of day (*yôm*) 3 into a 24-hour period seriously stains the meaning of all these words and the text itself.

Genesis 2:8-9 reinforces a longer-than-24 hour interpretation: “*And the LORD God planted a garden . . . And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow [tsamach] every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food . . .*” The word *tsamach* means to “sprout or grow,” natural processes that require more time than a 24-hour time period. This natural growth process cannot be considered as happening without God, since He caused it, is responsible for it, and governs over it. However, there is no textual suggestion He caused it to happen within a 24-hour time span.

Creation Day 4

Genesis 1:16 (NASB): *And God made [‘asah] the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.*

While YEC believe God created the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4 (Genesis 1:14-18), the OEC view is the Earth, sun, moon, and stars were created “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1) over a long period of time. In the OEC interpretation, the sun exists from “the beginning” and provides light necessary for photosynthesis needs of plants created on Day 3. (Some YECs claim God’s Shechinah glory provided the light for plant-life, although Scriptural evidence seems lacking.)

The view the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars) were created “in the beginning” is supported as follows.

- Genesis 1:1 (NASB): *In the beginning, God created (b•r•) the “heavens and the earth” (hashamayim we ha’ erets).* Several Bible scholars state that *hashamayim we ha’ erets* means “the entire universe, the entire creation”²⁸ or “everything which can be seen and or has physical existence.”²⁹ “The heavens and the earth’ (*hashamayim we ha’ erets*) constitutes a Hebrew phrase known as a merism. These two words [heavens and earth] have a different meaning when coupled together than when they are used separately.”³⁰ The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines *hashamayim we ha’ erets* as “all the raw materials needed to make suns, planets, stars, nebulae, galaxies, molecules, atoms, electrons . . .”³¹ Bruce Waltke, in his book *Creation and Chaos*, also makes the point that *hashamayim we ha’ erets* refers to the totality of the physical universe, all matter and energy and whatever else it contains.³² There is ample justification for the OEC view of the sun, moon, and stars being included in the Genesis 1:1 creation of “the heavens and the earth.”
- Genesis 1:14 (NASB): *Let there be (hayah) lights in the expanse of the heavens.* The Hebrew word for “be” (*hayah*) means “to become, occur, come to pass.”³³ Light became visible (“came to pass”) on planet earth. Natural history suggests a dense, permanent cloud cover enveloped early Earth. Job 38:9 explains, “When I made clouds its [Earth’s] garment and wrapped it in thick darkness.” Gleason Archer writes on the 4th creation day, “God parted the cloud cover enough for direct sunlight to fall on the earth and for accurate observations of the movements of the sun, moon, and stars to take place.”³⁴
- Genesis 1:14-15 (NASB): *Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth; and it was so.* The v

erb translated “and it was so,” denotes a completed action. “This completed action phrase confirms that the sun and moon had performed each of the functions commanded in Genesis 1:14-15. It indicates that each of the functions of signs, seasons, and years had completed at least one cycle. This is an additional indication that the ‘creative yom’ are long periods of time.”³⁵ This cycle of “signs and seasons” could not be completed within the confines of a 24-hour solar day.

- Genesis 1:16 (NASB): *God made (asah) the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made (asah) the stars also.* God did not *create (bara)* the sun, moon, and stars; He made (*asah*) them. *Asah* means to “produce, manufacture, or fabricate” from pre-existing, previously created matter. Several noted theologians suggest verse 16 is a parenthetical statement, meaning God *had made* the sun, moon, and stars earlier than Day 4:

Gleason Archer: “The Hebrew verb *wayya`as*’ in verse 16 should better be rendered ‘Now [God] *had made* the two great luminaries . . .’³⁶

Wayne Grudem: “Can be taken as *perfects* indicating what God had done before . . . This view would imply that God *had made* the sun, moon, and stars earlier . . . or allowed them to be seen from the earth on Day 4.”³⁷

Harris, Archer, and Waltke: “Verse 16 should *not* be understood as indicating the creation of the heavenly bodies for the first time on the fourth creative day; rather it informs us that the sun, moon, and stars *were created* on Day 1.”³⁸

James Montgomery Boice: “It is not said that these [sun, moon, and stars] were created on the fourth day; they were created in the initial creative work of God referred to in Genesis 1:1.”³⁹

One final comment on Day 4: The word “made” (*asah*) in verse 16 is in the *Qal Imperfect*, but prefixed with “and” (“*waw*”), the effect being to make the action of the verb a completed (*perfect*) action. “[Some] have seized upon the usual English translation (“*and God made*”) and have read the verb as indicating immediate action. That is to say, they take ‘made’ as having occurred just an instant before the visual appearance of the sun and moon. The Hebrew does not allow that interpretation . . . The ‘making’ (*asah*) refers to an action completed in the past and is correctly translated by the pluperfect ‘*and had made*.’”⁴⁰

Creation Day 6

Genesis 1:24-31, 2:5-25 (NASB): *Then God said, “Let the earth*

bring forth living creatures after their kind . . . Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . . And God created man in His own image . . . And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good . . . LORD God formed every beast of the field . . . and the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field . . . So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man . . . He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place, And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man. . . .”

The magnitude of accomplishments completed in creation day 6 suggests a period longer than 24 hours. Scholars have enumerated all the events of Day 6: “God makes the land animals, creates Adam, plants the Garden and moves man there, lays instructions on him, puts him through a search for ‘a helper fit for him,’ names all the animals, casts a deep sleep over him and makes a woman out of his rib . . . the way man responds in verse 23, ‘*this at last*’ (ESV) confirms our impression of a long wait.”⁴¹

Some propose that God intervened supernaturally to enable Adam to accomplish these tasks in a miraculously rapid fashion. However, there appears to be no Scriptural basis for this claim. In fact, what we see in the text is God giving Adam ample time through working the garden, naming the animals, and so forth, to eventually experience loneliness and the desire for a “helper.”

Considering the events of the creation days, particularly 3, 4, and 6, it is difficult to image these activities occurring within 24-hour periods. As Gleason Archer concludes, “Obviously the ‘days’ of chapter 1 are intended to represent stages of unspecified length, not literal twenty-four hour days.”⁴²

Other Considerations

The Seventh Day

Moses concluded each of the first six creation days with the refrain “*There was evening and there was morning, the [N]th day.*” Each *yôm* of creation is bracketed by “evening and morning” except the seventh day. The distinct change in pattern for the seventh day suggests that God’s seventh day is still ongoing, and therefore cannot be a 24-hour day. Supporting evidence comes from John 5:16-18, in which Jesus explains that His Father “is always at work to this very day” and Psalm 95:5-11, where David refers to God’s seventh day of rest as ongoing. If the seventh “day” of Genesis is not closed, it is more than a 24-hour period of time.

Exodus 20:9,11

Two other texts are often quoted to support the 24-hour day view. The first is Exodus 20:9,11: *Six days you shall labor and do all your work . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.* However, does this verse prove the Genesis creation days are 24-

hour calendar days? Not necessarily. Some propose the following explanation: “We hold that verse 9 addresses the work week of humans (seven 24-hour days), verse 11 addresses the work week of God (seven long periods), and Leviticus 25:5 addresses the work week of farm lands (seven years).”⁴³ Also, as noted above, textual evidence suggests the events described in days 3, 4, and 6 take demonstrably more time than 24 hours. Therefore the six “days” of Exodus 20:11 cannot be completed within 144 hours (6x24 hours) and cannot be 24-hour calendar days.⁴⁴

One additional factor needs to be considered. While young-earth creationists claim the phrase from Exodus 20:11, “in six days . . .,” infers God created everything within the confines of a literal week of 24-hour days, the word “in” does not appear in the Hebrew. The original Hebrew is more accurately translated, “for six *yôms* the LORD made.” This somewhat negates the inclusive “in six days” meaning. The addition of “in” originated with the KJV translators and “played a significant role in the advocacy of the creation days being completed within 144 hours (6X24).”⁴⁵

Augustine and others have commented that God’s days are not the same as man’s days. This seems to make sense, since God is not bound by our dimension of time. Thus, we shouldn’t impose the meaning of *our* days onto God’s days. Man’s days are copies and shadows of the divine and eternal, not the opposite. Exodus 20:11 merely provides a picture we can understand, a pattern of six periods of work and one period of rest.

Mark 10:6

The second verse used by some to suggest a young earth is Jesus’ comment in Mark 10:6: *But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.* YECs argue this verse implies that virtually no time transpired between the creation of the universe and the creation of Adam & Eve, and since Adam & Eve were created only 6,000 years ago (Ussher chronology), thus the earth must be young. Had the earth been created billions of years ago, then Jesus would have been wrong, but since Jesus can’t be wrong, then the earth must be young.

However, this argument stems from a faulty exegesis of Mark 10:6. The context of Mark 10:6 is made clear in Mark 10:7-8: “a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one flesh.” The context is the creation of the human race and the institution of marriage—not the creation of the universe. As the Wycliffe Bible Commentary notes, “The condition which existed in the beginning is indicative of God’s ideal. He meant *marriage* to be a life-long union in all cases.”⁴⁶ The Greek word used in Mark 10:6 for “creation” (*ktisis*), is the same word used in 1 Peter 2:13, *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution (ktisis).* Because the context is the creation of humanity and the beginning of the institution of marriage, the verse is unrelated to the age of the earth.

Concluding Comment

To conclude this section, here is a quote from a paper published from the Proceedings of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI, Summit II, 1982):

“Moses never intended the creative days to be understood as a mere twenty-four hours in length, and the information he included in chapter 2 logically precludes us from doing so. It is only by a neglect of proper hermeneutical methods that this impression ever became prevalent among God’s people, during the post-biblical era. Entirely apart from any findings of modern science or challenges of contemporary scientism, the twenty-four hour theory was never correct and should never have been believed—except by those who are bent on proving the presence of genuine contradictions in Scripture.”⁴⁷

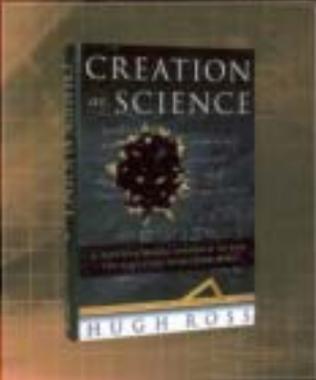
[NOTE: The rest of this article will appear in the September Chapter newsletter.]

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