

scholars who are considered to be conservative, yet do not accept the days of creation as ordinary-length days:

From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-hour days...This seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that planet Earth was created billions of years ago (*Survey: Old Testament Introduction*, G. Archer). We have shown the possibility of God's having formed the Earth and its life in a series of creative days representing long periods. In view of the apparent age of the Earth, this is not only possible—it is probable (*Commentary on Genesis*, J. Boice).

It is as if these theologians view “nature” as a 67th book of the Bible, with even more authority than the 66 written books. Consider the words of Charles Spurgeon in 1877:

We are invited, brethren, most earnestly to go away from the old-fashioned belief of our forefathers because of the supposed discoveries of science. What is science? The method by which man tries to conceal his ignorance. It should not be so, but so it is. You are not to be dogmatical in theology, my brethren, it is wicked; but for scientific men it is the correct thing. You are never to assert anything very strongly; but scientists may boldly assert what they cannot prove, and may demand a faith far more credulous than any we possess. Forsooth, you and I are to take our Bibles and shape and mould our belief according to the ever-shifting teachings of so-called scientific men. What folly is this! Why, the march of science, falsely so called, through the world may be traced by exploded fallacies and abandoned theories. Former explorers once adored are now ridiculed; the continual wrecks of false hypotheses is a matter of universal notoriety. You may tell where the learned have encamped by the debris left behind of suppositions and theories as plentiful as broken bottles.

Those who would use historical science (as propounded by people who, for the most part, ignore God’s written revelation) to interpret the Bible, to teach us things about God, have matters back to front. Because we are fallen, fallible creatures, we need God’s written Word, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to properly understand natural history. Christians should build their thinking on the Bible, not on “science.”

The “Days” of Genesis 1

What does the Bible tell us about the meaning of “day” in Genesis 1? A word can have more than one meaning, depending on the context. For instance, the English word “day” can have perhaps 14 different meanings. For example, consider the following sentence: “Back in my father’s day, it took ten days to drive across the Australian Outback during the day.” Here the first occurrence of “day” means “time” in a general sense. The second “day,” where a number is used, refers to an ordinary day; and the third refers to the daylight portion of the 24-hour period. The point is that words can have more than one meaning, depending on the context.

To understand the meaning of “day” in Genesis 1, we need to determine how the Hebrew word for “day,” *yom*, is used in the context of Scripture. Consider the following:

(1) A typical concordance will illustrate that *yom* can have

a range of meanings: a period of light as contrasted to night; a 24-hour period; time; a specific point of time; or a year.

(2) A classical and well-respected *Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Brown, Driver & Briggs) has seven headings and many subheadings for the meaning of *yom*—but it defines the creation days of Genesis 1 as ordinary days under the heading “day as defined by evening and morning.”

(3) A number and the phrase “evening and morning” are used for each of the six days of creation (*Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31*).

(4) Outside Genesis 1, *yom* is used with a number 410 times, and each time it means an ordinary day. Why would Genesis 1 be the exception?

(5) Outside Genesis 1, *yom* is used with the word “evening” or “morning” 23 times. “Evening” and “morning” appear in association, but without *yom*, 38 times. All 61 times the text refers to an ordinary day. Why would Genesis 1 be the exception?

(6) In Genesis 1:5, *yom* occurs in context with the word “night.” Outside Genesis 1, “night” is used with *yom* 53 times—and each time it means an ordinary day. Why would Genesis 1 be the exception?

(7) The plural of *yom*, which doesn’t appear in Genesis 1, *can* be used to communicate a longer time period, for example, “in those days.” Adding a number here would be nonsensical. Clearly, in Exodus 20:11, where a number is used with “days,” without doubt it refers to six Earth-rotation days.

(8) There are words in biblical Hebrew (such as *olam* or *qedem*) that are very suitable for communicating long periods of time, or indefinite time, but these are not used in Genesis 1.

Dr. James Barr (*Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University*), who does not believe Genesis is true history, nonetheless admitted as far as the language of Genesis 1 is concerned that:

So far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1-11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that **(a)** creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience **(b)** the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story **(c)** Noah’s Flood was understood to be worldwide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark.

If we are prepared to let the words of the language speak to us in accord with the context and normal definitions, without being influenced by outside ideas, then the word for “day” in Genesis 1—which is qualified by a number, the phrase “evening and morning” and for Day 1 the words “light and darkness”—***obviously*** means an ordinary day (about 24 hours).

The leaders of the Reformation responded to some who said that God created all things in only ***one day***, or in an ***instant***.

When Moses writes that God created Heaven and Earth and whatever is in them in six days, then let this period continue to have been six days, and do not venture to devise any comment

according to which six days were one day. But, if you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are. For you are to deal with Scripture in such a way that you bear in mind that God Himself says what is written. But since God is speaking, it is not fitting for you wantonly to turn His Word in the direction you wish to go (*Martin Luther*).

Albeit the duration of the world, now declining to its ultimate end, has not yet attained six thousand years...God’s work was completed not in a moment but in six days (*John Calvin*).

These two leaders of the Protestant Reformation called the church back to Scripture—***Sola Scriptura*** (Scripture alone). Both Luther and Calvin were adamant that Genesis 1 taught six ordinary days of creation—only thousands of years ago.

Why Six Days?

Because God is infinite in power and wisdom, there’s no doubt He could have created the universe in no time at all, or six seconds, or six minutes or six hours—after all, with God nothing is impossible (*Luke 1:37*). Yet, the question is, “Why did God take so long? Why six days?” He gives us the answer:

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...Six days may work be done...for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed (*Exod 20:11; 31:15-17*).

The seven-day week has no basis outside of Scripture. In this passage, God commands Israel to work for six days and rest for one—thus giving us a reason why He deliberately took as long as six days to create everything. He set the example for man. Our week is patterned after this principle. Now if He created everything in six thousand, or six million years, followed by a rest of one thousand or one million years, then we would have a very interesting week indeed!

As the days of creation are ordinary days, then by adding up the years in Scripture (assuming no gaps in the genealogies), the age of the universe is only about six thousand years.

Refuting Common Objections to Six Literal Days

Objection 1— “*Science*” has shown the earth and universe to be billions of years old; therefore the “days” of creation must be long periods (or indefinite periods) of time.

Answer— (1) The age of the earth, as determined by man’s fallible methods, is based on unproven assumptions, so it is not proven that the earth is billions of years old.

(2) This unproven age is being used to force an interpretation on the language of the Bible. Thus, man’s fallible theories are allowed to interpret the Bible. This ultimately undermines the use of language to communicate.

(3) Evolutionary scientists claim the fossil layers over the earth’s surface date back hundreds of millions of years. As soon as one allows millions of years for the fossil layers, then one has accepted death, bloodshed, disease, thorns and suffering ***before*** Adam’s sin. The Bible makes it clear that death, bloodshed, disease, thorns and suffering are a ***consequence of***

sin. God gave man and animals ***plants*** to eat (*Gen 1:29,30*). This is reading Genesis at face value, as literal history, as Jesus did (*see Matt 19:3-6*). There is also a theological distinction made between animals and plants. Human beings and higher animals are described in Genesis 1 as having a *nephesh*, or life principle. This is true of at least the vertebrate land animals as well as the birds and fish (*Gen 1:20,24*). Plants do not have this nephesh—they are not “alive” in the same sense animals are. They were given ***for food***.

Man was allowed to eat meat only after the Flood (*Gen 9:3*). This also makes it obvious that the statements in Genesis 1:29,30 were meant to inform us that man and animals were vegetarian to start with. Also, in Genesis 9:2, we are told of a change God made in the way animals react to man.

God warned Adam that if he ate of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” he would “surely die” (*Gen 2:17*). The Hebrew translated “you shall surely die” actually means “dying, you will die.” In other words, immediate, spiritual death (separation from God) would be followed by a process of physical decay, ending eventually in bodily death.

After Adam disobeyed God, the Lord “clothed” Adam and Eve with “coats of skins” (*Gen 3:21*). To do this God shed the blood of animals. God requires the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (*Heb 9:22*). What happened in the Garden of Eden was a picture of the Atonement—foreshadowing Christ’s blood to be shed for us as “the Lamb of God” (*John 1:29*), and Christ’s righteousness to clothe us as “the righteousness of God” (*Rom 3:21,22; 2 Cor 5:21*).

Now if the Garden of Eden was sitting on a fossil record of dead things millions of years old, then there was the shedding of blood ***before*** sin. This would destroy the foundation of the Atonement. The Bible is clear: the sin of Adam brought death and suffering into the world (*Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21*). As Romans 8:19-22 tells us, the whole of creation “groans” because of the effects of the Fall of Adam, and one day the creation will be liberated “from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (*v21*). Also, bear in mind that ***thorns*** came into existence after the Curse (*Gen 3:18*). Because there are thorns in the fossil record, it had to be formed ***after*** Adam and Eve sinned.

The pronouncement of the death penalty on Adam was both a curse and a blessing. A curse because death is horrible and continually reminds us of the ugliness of sin; a blessing because it meant the consequences of sin—separation from God—need not be eternal. Death stopped Adam and his descendants from living forever in a state of sin, with all its consequences. And because death was the just penalty for sin, Jesus Christ died, shedding His blood, to release Adam’s descendants from the consequences of sin. The Apostle Paul discusses this in depth in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Revelation 21 & 22 makes it clear that there will one day be “new heavens and a new earth,” where there will be “no

more death” and “no more curse” (*Rev 21:4; 22:3*)—just like it was before sin changed everything. If there are to be animals as part of the new Earth, obviously they will not be dying or eating each other, nor eating the redeemed people!

Therefore, adding the supposed millions of years to Scripture destroys the foundation of the message of the Cross.

Objection2— *According to Genesis 1, the sun was not created until Day 4. How could there be day and night (ordinary days) without the sun for the first three days?*

Answer— (1) Again, it is important for us to let the language of the Bible speak to us without outside influences. Each of the six days of creation appears with the Hebrew word *yom* qualified by a number and the phrase “evening and morning.” The first three days are written *the same way* as the next three. So if we let the language speak to us—all six days were ordinary Earth days.

(2) The sun isn’t needed for day and night! What is needed is light and a rotating Earth. On the first day God made light (*Gen 1:3*). The phrase “evening and morning” certainly implies a rotating Earth. Thus, if we have light from one direction, and a spinning Earth, there can be day and night.

Where did the light come from? We are not told, but Genesis 1:3 certainly indicates it was a created light to provide day and night until God made the sun on Day 4 to rule the day He had made. Revelation 21:23 tells us that one day the sun will not be needed, as the glory of God will lighten the heavenly city, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.

Objection3— *2 Peter 3:8 says that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,” therefore the days of creation could be long periods of time.*

Answer— (1) This passage has *no* creation context. It is *not* referring to Genesis or the six days of creation.

(2) This verse has what is called a “comparative article”—“as” or “like”—which is not found in Genesis 1. In other words, it is *not* saying a day *is* a thousand years—it is comparing a real, literal day to a real, literal thousand years. The context of this passage is the Second Coming of Christ. It is saying that, to God, a day is *like* a thousand years, because God is *outside* of time. God is not limited by natural processes and time as humans are. What may seem like a long time to us (waiting for the Second Coming), or a short time, is nothing to God either way.

(3) The second part of the verse reads “and a thousand years as one day,” which, in essence, cancels out the first part of the verse for those who would equate a day with a thousand years! Thus, it cannot be saying a day is a thousand years or vice versa.

(4) Psalm 90:4 says, “For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Here a thousand years is being compared with a “watch in the night” (four hours). Because the phrase “watch in the

night” is joined in a particular way to “yesterday,” it is saying that a thousand years is being compared with a short period of time—not simply to a day.

(5) If one used this passage to claim that “day” in the Bible means a thousand years, then, to be consistent, one would have to say that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three thousand years, or that Jesus has not yet risen from the dead!

Other Problems with Long Days

(1) If the plants made on Day 3 were separated by millions of years from the birds and nectar bats (created Day 5), and insects (created Day 6) necessary for their pollination, then such plants could not have survived. This problem would be especially acute for species with complex symbiotic relationships (each depending on the other—for example, the yucca plant and the associated moth).

(2) Adam was created on Day 6, lived through Day 7, and then died when he was 930 years old (*Gen 5:5*). If each day was a thousand years, or millions of years, Adam’s age at death would make no sense!

(3) Some people want the days of creation to be long periods in an attempt to harmonize evolution or billions of years with the Bible’s account of origins. However, the order of events according to long-age beliefs does not agree with that of Genesis. Consider the following table:

Contradictions Between the Order of Creation in the Bible and Evolution/Day-ages

Biblical account of Creation	Evolution/long-age speculation
Earth before the sun and stars	Stars and sun before earth
Earth covered in water initially	Earth a molten blob initially
Oceans first, then dry land	Dry land, then the oceans
Life first created on the land	Life started in the oceans
Plants created before the sun	Plants came long after the sun
Land animals created after birds	Land animals before birds
Whales before land animals	Land animals before whales

Clearly, those who do not accept the six literal days are the ones reading their own preconceived ideas into the passage.

Other than the “gap theory” (the belief that there’s a gap of indeterminate time between the first two verses of Genesis 1), the major compromise positions that try to harmonize long ages and/or evolution with Genesis fall into two categories:

(1) “*theistic evolution*” wherein God supposedly directed the evolutionary process of millions of years, or even just set it up and let it run.

(2) “*progressive creation*” where God supposedly intervened in the processes of death and struggle for survival to create millions of species at various times over millions of years.

It really *does matter* what a Christian believes concerning the days of creation. All schemes which insert eons of time into, or before, creation undermine the gospel by putting death, bloodshed, disease, thorns and suffering before sin and the Fall. Here are two more reasons why it’s important:

(1) It is really a matter of how one approaches the Bible, in principle. If we do not allow the language to speak to us in context, but try to make the text fit ideas outside of Scripture, then ultimately the meaning of any word in any part of the Bible depends on man’s interpretation—which can change according to whatever outside ideas are in vogue.

(2) If one allows “science” (which has wrongly become synonymous with evolution and materialism) to determine our understanding of Scripture, then this can lead to a slippery slope of unbelief through the rest of God’s Word. For instance, “science” would proclaim that a person cannot be raised from the dead. Does this mean we should interpret the Resurrection of Christ to reflect this? Sadly, some do just this, saying that the Resurrection simply means that the teachings of Christ live on in His followers!

When people accept at face value what Genesis is teaching, and accept the days as ordinary days, they will have no problem accepting and making sense of the rest of the Bible. Martin Luther made this statement:

I have often said that whoever would study Holy Scripture should be sure to see to it that he stays with the simple words as long as he can and by no means departs from them unless an article of faith compels him to understand them differently. For of this we must be certain: no clearer speech has been heard on Earth than what God has spoken.

God’s people need to realize that the Word of God is something very special. It is not just the words of men. As Paul said, “Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (*1 Thess 2:13*). “Every word of God is pure...Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (*Prov 30:5,6*). The Bible cannot be treated as just some great literary work. The Word of God should be approached with humility and reverence.

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word (*Isaiah 66:2*).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (*2 Tim 3:16,17*).

In the original autographs, every word and letter in the Bible is there because God put it there. Let us listen to God speaking to us through His Word, and not arrogantly think we can tell God what He really means!■

—Adapted from the writings of Ken Ham



If the “days” of creation are really “geologic ages” of millions of years, then the gospel message is undermined at its foundation because it puts death, disease, thorns and suffering *before* Adam’s Fall. This idea also shows an erroneous approach to Scripture—that the Word of God can be interpreted on the basis of man’s fallible theories.

It is a good exercise to read Genesis 1 and try to put aside outside influences that may cause you to have predetermined ideas of what the word “day” may mean. The simple result of just letting the words speak for themselves is that God created all things in six ordinary (about 24-hour) days. Being really honest, you would have to admit that you could never get the idea of millions of years from reading this passage.

The majority of Christians (including many Christian leaders) in the Western world, however, either do not insist that these days of creation were ordinary-length days, or they accept and teach that they must have been long periods of time—even millions or billions of years.

God communicates through language. When He made Adam, He had already programmed him with a language, so there could be communication. Human language consists of words used in a specific context that relate to reality around us. God can reveal things to man, and man can communicate with God, as these words have meaning and convey an understandable message.

In every instance where someone has not accepted the days of creation to be ordinary days, it is because they have not allowed the words of Scripture to speak to them in context, as the language requires for communication. They have been influenced by ideas from *outside* of Scripture. Thus, they have set a precedent that could allow any word to be reinterpreted by the preconceived ideas of the person reading the words. Ultimately, this will lead to a communication breakdown, as the same words in the same context could mean different things to different people.

Many church leaders today do *not* accept the creation days as ordinary Earth-rotation days. However, when their reasons are investigated, we find that influences from *outside* of Scripture are the ultimate cause. They admit that Genesis 1, taken at face value, seems to teach six ordinary days. But then they say that this cannot be because of the age of the universe, or because of some other extra-biblical reason!

Consider the following representative quotes from Bible