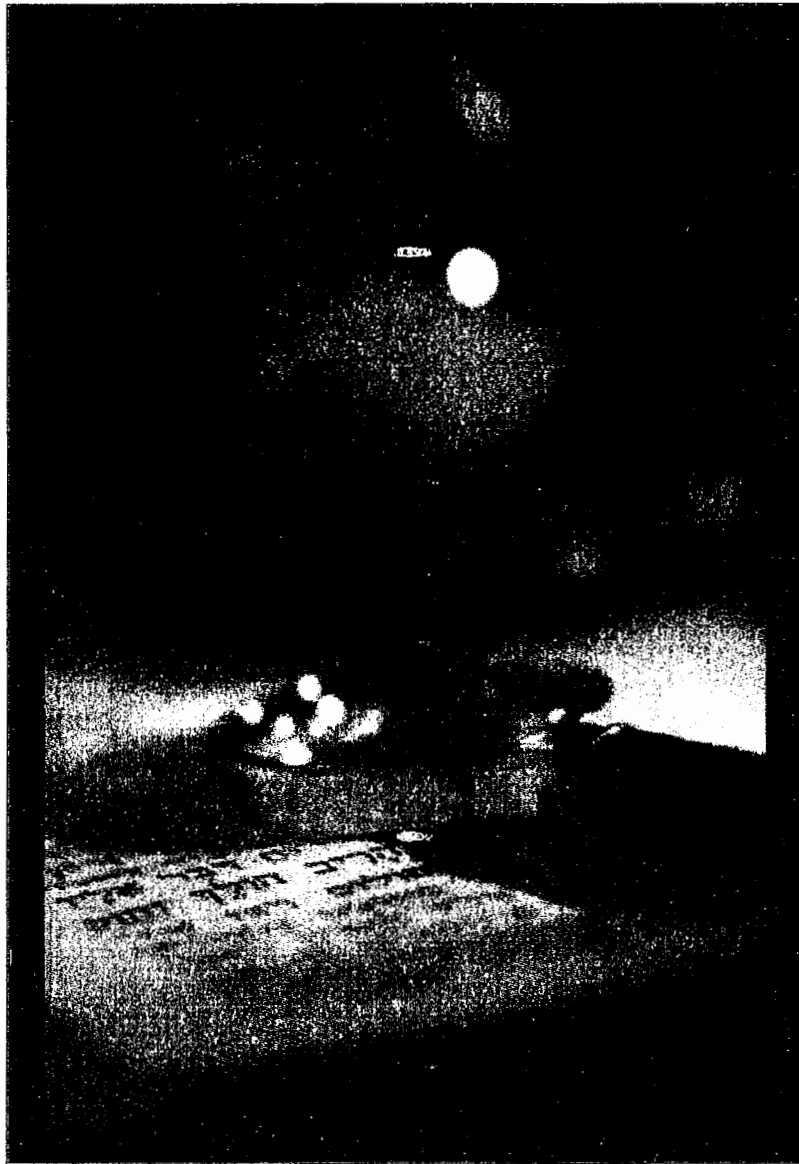


A Biblical Case for an Old Earth Interpretation of Genesis



By John Murphy

A Biblical Case for an Old-Earth Interpretation of Genesis

A Personal Introduction:

I am the son of a preacher and have been raised in the church all of my life. My mother and father attended the Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, Tennessee, and my father was an ordained minister in the Free Will Baptist denomination. If you think Southern Baptists are conservative, Free Will Baptists make them look like a bunch of tree-huggin,' hybrid drivin,' whole-foods eatin,' tie-dye wearin' liberals. Needless to say, I was raised in a very, very conservative biblical tradition.

My father was a young-earth creationist and I held that position for almost 35 years. When I first became interested in Christian apologetics I read a couple of my father's books by Henry Morris, considered by many to be the father of the modern day young-earth creationist movement.

Initially, I read and studied Christian apologetics because I wanted to affirm my position. I favored books and articles that gave evidence in support of my beliefs and my point of view, and that refuted opposing worldviews. I really wasn't too interested in reading books or articles espousing differing positions. They were wrong and I knew they were wrong so I didn't feel the need to waste my time reading their liberal, ill-informed points of view.

Then I was sucker punched. I was preparing a Christian apologetics presentation for Sunday school and was advised that Dr. Hugh Ross, of the Christian apologetics ministry Reasons To Believe, was going to be speaking at the University of Texas. Now because he was called a *Christian* apologist, I just assumed he was a young-earth creationist. I attended his lecture and it didn't take long to learn that he was not a young-earth creationist. However, it also didn't take long to learn that, as an old-earth creationist, he *was not* the liberal, evolution lovin,' biblically undermining theologian I was led to believe all old-earth creationists were.

The old-earth creationist position was not at all what I had been led to believe it was. I immediately went home and purchased Dr. Ross' book *The Genesis Question* and quickly devoured it. Initially I did not embrace everything that was promoted, but as I researched further, I found the old-earth interpretation to be more compelling and would eventually convert. Soon thereafter, as I began to discuss the *actual* position of old-earth creationists with my father, he also converted.

From that point forward my emphasis in regard to Christian apologetics has changed. I no longer filter my reading to include only books and articles which promote and defend my current point of view. My interest is in knowing and understanding the truth,

whatever that may be. In committing to following the truth I have to be prepared to change my position when the evidence merits such an adjustment.

I have found this position to be liberating. I no longer feel I have to hold or defend doctrines or positions just because they are held by my family, my church or denomination. I don't change quickly and easily, but when the evidence is sufficient to warrant a different conclusion, I am committed to embracing the truth, wherever that may lead. Today, I can honestly say that I believe in God, in Christianity and the inerrancy of the Bible because the evidence as a whole is more compelling than not.

The Day/Age Old Earth Position:

My purpose today is not to convert you. Instead, my primary purpose is to lay out the "Old-Earth" interpretation accurately and in its most positive light so that you may consider it for what it actually is as opposed what some may have led you to believe.

The "Old-Earth" interpretation is a large umbrella under which you will find several different variations. The variation I will be outlining today is often called the "Day/Age" interpretation. Because the Day/Age position is often misrepresented, I would like first to highlight some foundational points held by most Day/Age creationists:

- *This is not a figurative interpretation.* The Day/Age position attempts to take a literal reading of Genesis. It is not trying to imply that this is what the Bible *could* be interpreted as saying. The position takes the stance this is what author of Genesis, led by the Holy Spirit, literally meant to convey to his readers.
- *It affirms the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.*
- *It affirms Genesis is a real historical account.*
- *It affirms God supernaturally created plants and animals.*
- *It affirms God supernaturally created Adam and Eve.* Therefore, Adam and Eve were real and the 1st humans.
- *Day/Age proponents generally deny Darwinian macro-evolutionary processes.*¹
- *The position is presently embraced by a number of internationally respected Old Testament scholars including Gleason Archer, Walt Kaiser and Norman Geisler.*
- *The International Council of Biblical Inerrancy has affirmed the Day/Age position qualifies as a valid interpretation of Genesis which upholds biblical inerrancy.*²

The Story of Galileo:

With that in mind, I would like to lay a further foundation. Prior to Copernicus (1473-1543 AD) & Galileo (1564-1642 AD), the western world generally accepted a geocentric (earth-centered) model of the solar system. This model believed all heavenly bodies

¹ There are Bible believing Christians who believe in an old earth and Darwinian evolution, often referred to as Theistic Evolutionists. It might surprise many to know C.S. Lewis was a Theistic Evolutionist.

² Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter OF Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 22 Councils Attempt To Bring Calm, page 241-242.

revolved around the earth and that the earth was the center of the universe. The church believed this model to be biblically supported by a handful of passages suggesting the earth is stationary and immovable³ as well as the story of Joshua commanding the sun to stand still.⁴

However, in 1543 Copernicus proposed that the solar system was in fact heliocentric (sun-centered). In the 1600s Galileo was able to significantly improve the telescope and offered further arguments which seemed to support the heliocentric model.

Since these suggestions conflicted with traditional, widely accepted interpretations of Scripture, many in the church initially opposed the hypothesis. In a tableside chat Martin Luther is quoted as saying “*There is talk of a new astrologer (Copernicus) who wants to prove that the earth moves and goes around instead of the sky, the sun, (and) the moon... The fool wants to turn the whole art of astronomy upside-down. However, as Holy Scripture tells us, so did Joshua bid the sun to stand still and not the earth.*”⁵

However, in time, Bible scholars began to acknowledge that Scripture never specifically outlined a geocentric model of the solar system and further recognized that these passages describing the earth as stationary and/or immovable should be understood *phenomenologically*, that is, from the viewpoint of the observer. For example, any time we use the words “sunrise” or “sunset” we use these words phenomenologically. The sun *appears* to set or rise, even though we know it’s the earth that’s rotating. These words don’t literally mean to convey the sun is moving up or down and we don’t accuse anyone of being a geocentrist when expressing them.

Due in large part to the efforts of scientists, at present, there is no debate in regard to the interpretation of these passages. No one today maintains the Bible teaches geocentrism. In light of this, a couple of historical lessons are to be learned: (1) We should always be careful to distinguish between what Scripture actually says, versus what many interpret it to say and; (2) There are undisputed instances when natural or general revelation (science) can help us to more accurately understand God’s special revelation (the Bible).

The Age of the Heavens and Earth:

With these points in mind, it is very important to note that the Bible never explicitly states the age of the heavens or earth. 24-hour day proponents J. Ligon Duncan III & David Hall confirm “*In short, we take no position on the age of the universe precisely because that question is not directly addressed by the canon.*”⁶

³ Psalms 93:1, 96:10, 104:5, I Chron. 16:30, Eccl. 1:5

⁴ Joshua 10:12-13.

⁵ Lennox, John C., *Seven Days That Divide The World*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011) Chapter One: But Does It Move? A Lesson From History, page 17. Lennox notes this quote is controversial.

⁶ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, The 24-Hour View, page 22.

Fellow proponents Paul Nelson & John Mark Reynolds add “*The Bible no place states an age for the cosmos. This number is derived by extrapolation from the text. Such interpretation always opens up broader possibilities of error or misunderstanding of the text.*”⁷

Genesis 1:1 states “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This could be (1) a title or summary statement with the details of their creation to follow or (2) it could be a description of action which actually precedes the first day. Verse 2 begins with “Now the earth was formless and empty...” Since the existence of the earth is already assumed by verse 2, this would seem to support the interpretation that the creation of the heavens and the earth does, in fact, occur prior to the first “day.” C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament at Covenant Seminary states “...we find that taking Genesis 1:1 as a background event, prior to the main storyline is the best way to read it...The first verse, as I see it, narrates the initial creation event; then verse 2 describes the condition of the earth just before the creation week gets under way. These two verses stand outside the six days of God’s work week, and – just speaking grammatically – say nothing about the length of time between the initial event of 1:1 and the first day of 1:3.”⁸

Textually, belief in a young-earth or young-universe is not a requirement, even for 24-hour day proponents. Professor John C. Lennox summarizes “*It would therefore be logically possible to believe that the days of Genesis are twenty-four-hour days (of one earth week) and to believe that the universe is very ancient.*”⁹ (emphasis in original)

The Case For A Day/Age Interpretation

The “Days” of Genesis:

The English word “day” in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word “yom.” Yom can be, and is, literally translated as “day” in different ways:

1. **The daylight hours** – Gen 1:5 “God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night’...”
2. **Solar Day (24-hours)** – Gen 1:14 “And God said, ‘Let there be lights... and let them serve as signs to mark the seasons and days and years’....”
3. **A longer, but finite period of time** – Gen 2:4 “...in the day that the Lord made the earth and the heavens.” (KJV)

Gen 2:4 “...When the Lord made the earth and the heavens.” (NIV)

⁷ *Three Views On Creation And Evolution*, J.P. Moreland & John Mark Reynolds, General Editors, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1999), Paul Nelson & John Mark Reynolds, Young Earth Creationism, page 49

⁸ *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, Collins, John C., (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), Chapter 4, Genesis 1:1-2:3: The Creation Week. pg 54, 78.

⁹ Lennox, John C., *Seven Days That Divide The Word: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Chapter Three, But Is It Old? The Days Of Creation, pg 53.

Gen 2:4 "...**At the time** the Lord made the earth and the heavens." (Apologetics Study Bible)¹⁰

Question: If I use the word "day" to describe daylight or "day" to describe a 24-hour time period, which is the literal use of the word "day?" *Answer:* The word "day" is being used literally in both instances. It is possible to have multiple *literal* definitions of the same word.

The Day/Age position maintains that the "days" of Genesis 1 are most correctly translated as "*periods of time*" and not "*solar days*." This is another "literal" definition of the Hebrew word "*yom*." Biblical Hebrew is comprised of only a little more than 3,100 words,¹¹ whereas the English language has just exceeded one million (depending on how you count words).¹² There are no other biblical Hebrew words for an era, age, epoch, eon, etc., describing a period of time.

Church History:

The antiquity of the earth and universe began to be validated with the rise of the science of geology around 1800 AD. However, even well before this time, distinguished church fathers and theologians struggled with knowing the correct interpretation of these "days" in Genesis.

In the second and third century Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165), Irenaeus (c. A.D. 120-200), Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-215) and Origen (c. A.D. 185-254) each struggled with or rejected the 24-hour interpretation in their writings.¹³

Dr. Hugh Ross notes: "*Among early church leaders, no one penned a more extensive analysis of the creation 'days' duration than Augustine (A.D. 354-430). In The City Of God this esteemed scholar wrote 'As for these 'days,' it is difficult, perhaps impossible to think – let alone explain in words – what they mean.' In The Literal Meaning of Genesis he added, 'But at least we know that it (The Genesis creation day) is different from the ordinary day with which we are familiar.'*"¹⁴

Sir Isaac Newton has been called the greatest scientist of all time. He was also a Christian and wrote extensively in regard to theology. In fact, atheist Michael Shermer confesses the National Science Foundation rejected a proposal to publish all of Newton's unpublished work on theology because they thought it would be bad for

¹⁰ Gen 2:4 – Most translations translate *yom* here as either "*in the day*" or "*when*"

¹¹ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), Hugh Ross & Gleason Archer, *The Day-Age View*, pg 125.

¹² www.languagemonitor.com

¹³ Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter Of Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 4: The Wisdom Of The Ages, pages 43-44.

¹⁴ Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter Of Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 4: The Wisdom Of The Ages, pages 45.

science if it became widely known that he held such strong beliefs in God.¹⁵ Newton also rejected the 24-hour view noting “*Now for ye number and length of ye six days: by what is said above you may make ye first day as long as you please, and ye second day too.*”¹⁶

The following is some of the evidence which leads many Bible scholars to believe the Day/Age interpretation to be the correct one.

The Seventh Day – God’s Sabbath Rest:

Each of the first six “days” of creation begin with the phrase “And God said,” the pertinent details of that “day” are described and then it ends with the refrain “And there was evening, and there was morning - the ____ day.” This pattern discontinues in regard to the seventh day. God had finished his creative work by this time, so it is understandable that it would not begin with the phrase “And God said.” However, the absence of the refrain noting the end of the day has caught the attention of many Bible scholars.

C. John Collins notes “*the refrain...clearly indicates the end of each workday, and its absence from the seventh day is so striking that an adequate reading must account for it.*”¹⁷

The Day/Age position states there is no refrain of “evening and morning – the seventh day” because the seventh day, commonly known as God’s Sabbath “day” or Sabbath rest, continues to the present. The lack of this refrain implies we are still in this seventh day/age; it has not yet ended.

Many Bible scholars promote the idea that it is best to use the Bible to interpret itself. Weight is often given to parts of the Scripture that reflect upon and illuminate other passages. This idea of a continuing Sabbath rest, or Sabbath day/age seems to be confirmed by another biblical author.

The author of Hebrews specifically notes: 4:3-11 – “3 And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: ‘And on the seventh day God rested from all his work’...6 It still remains that some will enter that rest...9 There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work,

¹⁵ Dembski, William Editor, *Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing*, (Wilmington, DE; ISI Books, 2004), Chapter 7: Refereed Journals, Frank Tipler, page 125.

¹⁶ *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, vol 2, 1676-1687, letter #247, Newton to Burnet, January 1680-1, ed. H.W. Turnbull (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press, 1961), page 334 as quote by Dr. Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer, *The G3n3sis Debate*, page 68.

¹⁷ Collins, John C., *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), Chapter 4, Genesis 1:1-2:3: The Creation Week. pg 42.

just as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore make every effort to enter into that rest, so that no one will fall...”

The NIV Bible Study notes “*God rested from his work on the seventh day of creation, and thus his rest is already a reality. The rest God calls us to enter is not our rest, but his rest, which he invites us to share.*”¹⁸ ...*God’s rest may still be entered by faith in his Son.*”¹⁹ The author of Hebrews seems to undoubtedly confirm God’s Sabbath day, or Sabbath rest, has continued to this present time or present age. We are specifically invited to enter that rest. Therefore, the seventh “day” of Genesis can clearly be equated as a “period of time,” not a 24-hour day. This seventh day of rest is an age that continues to the present and we are invited to enter into this rest.

Professor David Snoke summarizes the position well: “*If the Sabbath day is an “age,” as Hebrews 4:3-4 teaches, then why cannot the other days of the creation story be “ages” also? The fact that the Sabbath day is an age seems to demand the interpretation that all the days were “God’s days,” not ours.*”²⁰ (Emphasis in original)

The Sixth Day:

Critics have suggested that Genesis 1 and 2 are two different creation accounts. However, most conservative Bible scholars view Genesis 1 giving an overview of the 7 days of creation and then Genesis 2 providing more detail in regard to the creation of man and woman on Day 6. Genesis 1 provides the broader overview, while Genesis 2 provides more specifics in regard to the creation of man on Day 6.

24-hour proponents Duncan and Hall note “...*following the overview of the seven creation days (Gen 1:1-2:4), Genesis 2:5-25 recapitulates and focuses on a single day – the sixth day of creation. Indeed, the only other interpretive option is to assume contradiction within the biblical narratives.*”²¹ The point being that the details of Genesis 2 are widely seen as describing events which all occurred on “Day” 6.

Bible scholars of all persuasions have noticed a lot happens during the 6th day. For example, combining the details of Genesis 1 & 2 we find the following events taking place:

- God created living creatures (livestock, etc.)
- God created wild animals

¹⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Heb 4:3 notes, pg 1861.

¹⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Heb 4:9 notes, pg 1862.

²⁰ Snoke, David PhD, *A Biblical Case For An Old Earth*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006) Chapter 5 The Biblical Case III, pg 104.

²¹ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, The 24-Hour View, page 53.

- God created creatures that move along the ground
- God created Adam
- God planted a garden making all kinds of trees grow out of the ground
- God put Adam into the garden to work and tend it
- God paraded all the livestock, birds of the air and beasts of the field before Adam so that he could name them and find a suitable helper
- After no suitable helper was found, God put Adam to sleep, took one of his ribs and made Eve

The question is: Did all of these events happen within a single 24-hour day? Duncan & Hall respond "*the question before us presents no real problem, especially if we assume the miraculous.*"²²

While I would agree that miraculous events occurred on the 6th day/age, such as the creation of Adam and Eve, that doesn't mean that every event described was in fact miraculous. The Bible is not shy about specifically declaring and identifying the *supernatural* acts of God.

"*Assumed miracles*" could be used to justify practically any line of reasoning or doctrine one might imagine. Dr. Francis Collins cautions "*Whatever the personal view, it is crucial that a healthy skepticism be applied when interpreting potentially miraculous events, lest the integrity and rationality of the religious perspective be brought into question. The only thing that will kill the possibility of miracles more quickly than a committed materialism is the claiming of miracle status for everyday events for which natural explanations are readily at hand.*"²³ As a Bible student I would suggest that the more "assumed miracles" one has to appeal to in order to sustain an interpretation, the more questionable that particular interpretation might be.

In several instances in Genesis 2, the narrative seems to suggest a passing of time.

Verse 8-9 notes "God planted a garden... (and) made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground." It doesn't say God created a garden. It says He planted it and caused all kinds of trees to grow from it. Westminster Theological Seminary Professor Vern Poythress notes "...in creating the Garden of Eden, God caused trees to grow up (Gen 2:9). The specific language indicates not creation in the moment, but rather a process of growth."²⁴ The act of planting and growing trees implies a passing of time. It does not imply instantaneous creation. We will elaborate on this point further in a moment.

²² *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, The 24-Hour View, page 53.

²³ Collins, Dr. Francis S., *The Language Of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence For Belief*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2006), Chapter Two: The War Of The Worldviews, page 51-52.

²⁴ *Three Views On Creation And Evolution*, J.P. Moreland & John Mark Reynolds, General Editors, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1999), Vern S. Poythress, *Young Earth Creationism Responses*, page 92-93.

Verse 15 notes Adam was put into the garden to work and tend it. This reading again could be read to imply that Adam had spent some time in the garden working it before other events unfolded.

Verses 19 and 20 God parades the beasts of the field and the birds of the air before Adam to name and look for a suitable helper. How many species or kinds were paraded before Adam and how long did this take? 24-hour proponent Dr. Jonathan Sarfati attempts to explain this away, but in doing so I would argue he merely amplifies the problem *“Even if we assume that Adam had to name as many as 2,500 kinds of animals, if he took five seconds per kind, and took a five-minute break every hour, he could have completed the task in well under four hours. This hardly seems onerous even for people today, and with Adam’s pre-Fall stamina and memory recall abilities, the problem disappears totally.”*²⁵

This seems rather far-fetched and overly simplistic. Assuming the guess of 2500 kinds of animals is correct, this would mean pulling names completely out of thin air, every 5 seconds, 12 different names every minute, not to mention the problem of actually moving 12 different birds or animals in front of Adam every minute. One can practically hear the Benny Hill music playing in the background as the animals scurry in front of Adam.

However, it seems much more logical that these animals were displayed before Adam over a period of time. Adam would have been allowed time to study and view these creatures and then give them names fitting of their attributes.

Many believe this passing of time to be confirmed in verses 22-23. God notes it is not good for Adam to be alone and proceeds to make woman. When presented with Eve, in the NIV Adam exclaims “This is now bone of my bones.” The ESV translates “This at last is bone of my bones,” and the ASB “This one, at last, is bone of my bone.”

Dr. Hugh Ross notes *“Upon seeing Eve, (in Hebrew) Adam exclaimed ‘Happa’am’. This same phrase in Gen 30:20 is translated ‘Now at last’ and in Gen 46:30 as ‘now finally.’ The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament translates Gen 2:23 as ‘at last bone of my bones.’”*²⁶ Adam is proclaiming “It’s about time!” This exclamation would seem odd if Adam himself were only a few hours old. The Hebrew narrative seems to suggest Adam had been waiting “some time” for a mate to arrive and was elated to finally see her.

Collectively, the events described on Day 6 seem to imply their taking longer than a single 24-hour day and appears to fit more comfortably within the Day/Age interpretation.

²⁵ Sarfati, Jonathan Ph.D., *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of “Progressive Creationism” (Billions of Years), As Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross*, (Green Forest, AR; Master Books, 2004) Chapter 2: The Days Of Creation, pg 89-90.

²⁶ Ross, Hugh Ph.D., *A Matter OF Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 7, Anchored in Scripture, Sixth-Day Events, page 80.

Further Insinuations of Time:

Earlier we noted that Genesis 2:8-9 refers to God planting a garden and causing the tress to grow. It was noted that this description seems to suggest a passing of time vs. instantaneous creation. We see a similar example on Day 3.

“11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds. And it was so.
12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” Genesis 1:11-12

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary notes “...it is noticeable that the trees, plants, and grasses – the three great divisions of the vegetable kingdom here mentioned – were not called into existence in the same way as the light and the air; they were made to grow, and they grew, as they still do, out of the ground...But nothing further is said and whether they were created in full maturity or the seeds were deposited in the soil...”²⁷

Theologian Krista Bontrager adds “It’s important to note that the text does not say all land vegetation instantaneously poofed into existence. The Hebrew verb *dāshā*, or ‘produce,’ has a broad meaning. It can be interpreted to indicate that plants arose as a direct result of a divine intervention. But it can also legitimately be interpreted to mean they were the outcome of divinely guided natural process. Adding to the case for the latter interpretation is the fact that the text says the land brought forth the vegetation.”²⁸ (emphasis in original)

On Day 6 verse 24 again states “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds;”

The specific depiction of the land producing vegetation is noticeably different from the other “*God made*” or “*God created*” descriptions. This seems to fit very comfortably within the day/age interpretation as God is here establishing the natural order of reproduction and popogation, which we still observe today.

Positive Benefits of the Position

When confronted with different possible interpretations, Bible scholars will often give weight or preferential consideration to interpretations which do the best job of resolving both internal and external conflicts. In this way the Day/Age position helps to resolve several major conflicts.

²⁷ PC Study Bible, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, Genesis 1:9-13

²⁸ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 4: Creation Days 1-3, pg 53.

In Line with Modern Science:

The Day/Age position beneficially resolves several issues. First and foremost, it aligns the biblical creation story with modern scientific findings. In 2009 Andrew Parker, an evolutionary biologist and Research Director at the National History Museum in London, after a number of people had written him suggesting his research seemed to echo some of the passages found in the Bible, picked up the book and had a read through Genesis 1. He commented *“Without expecting to find anything, I discovered a whole series of parallels between the creation story on the Bible’s first page and the modern, scientific account of life’s history. This at least made me think. The congruence was almost exact...The more detail is examined, the more convincing and remarkable I believe the parallels become.”* Naturally, Parker’s comments were made from an old-earth perspective.²⁹

To their credit, 24-hour proponents Paul Nelson and John Mark Reynolds candidly confess *“Natural science at the moment seems to overwhelmingly point to an old cosmos. Though (young-earth) creationist scientists have suggested some evidences for a recent cosmos, none are widely accepted as true. It is safe to say that most recent creationists are motivated by religious concerns...As it is now interpreted, the data are mostly against us...(Young –earth) creationists should humbly agree that their view is, at the moment, implausible on purely scientific grounds.”*³⁰

Dr. Hugh Ross details how he and John Morris, the president of the young-earth organization The Institute For Creation Research, were once being interviewed in regard to the age of the earth by John Stewart, the host of a Christian radio station in Los Angeles: *“(Stewart asked John Morris if) he or any of his associates had ever met or heard of a scientist who became persuaded that the universe or Earth is only thousands of years old based on scientific evidence without any reference to a particular interpretation of the Bible. Morris’s answer was an unequivocal no. Over a five-year period (1987-1993), John Stewart asked the same question he posed to John Morris to several other young-earth creationist leaders in various radio interviews he conducted. He always got the same answer: no.”*³¹

Alleviates the Need to Appeal to an “Appearance of Age”:

As just noted, the natural sciences overwhelmingly point to an old cosmos. In the past young-earth creationists have appealed to the *“appearance of age”* argument. This suggests God made everything in a mature state so that the universe appears to look old, but actually isn’t. For example, when God specially created Adam we presume he was created as a mature adult. At the moment of his creation he would have appeared

²⁹ Lennox, John C., *Seven Days That Divide The World: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Appendix B: The Cosmic Temple View, pg 143.

³⁰ *Three Views On Creation And Evolution*, J.P. Moreland & John Mark Reynolds, General Editors, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1999), Paul Nelson & John Mark Reynolds, *Young Earth Creationism*, page 49, 51

³¹ Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter OF Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 17, The Scientific Case For A Young Cosmos, page 206, 286.

to be perhaps 20-30 years old even though he wasn't. The same line of reasoning could be applied to the earth and the universe.

However this assertion begins to run into significant problems when you get into the details. For example, consider the light travel problem. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. Our *closest* neighbor, the Andromeda galaxy, is two million *light years* away (*one light year is 5,878,499,812,499 miles*). If it takes light from the closest galaxy millions of years to reach earth, how can the cosmos be only thousands of regular years old?

There really seem to be only three ways to resolve this from a young-earth perspective. (1) The measuring process for the distance of stars or the speed of light is wrong and the stars are actually much, much closer than we think. (2) The speed of light has changed over time. It used to be much, much faster. (3) The light was supernaturally created en route thus only giving the appearance of distant travel.³² Without getting into the specifics, each of these answers poses significant scientific and philosophical problems and even many young-earth creationists admit there is no satisfactory answer to this problem.

Perhaps an even bigger issue is not simply the appearance of age, but the "appearance of history." When God created Adam, it is one thing for him to look older than he was, but it is another thing entirely for him to have bodily physical evidence of past history. For example, on the day of his creation we would not expect him to have crow's feet around his eyes suggesting years of facial expressions. We would not expect to find scars on his body falsely suggesting past injuries. If we had the ability to view his internal organs we would not expect to find evidence of past surgeries.

Similarly, when we observe the earth and the cosmos we find evidence of past history which conflicts with the 24-hour interpretation of Genesis, such as geological layering, meteor craters and bio-deposits which appear to have happened well before man ever arrived on earth. *Why would God go to such great lengths to implant histories that so compellingly make the earth and universe appear much older than His word declares?*

In Romans 1:20 the apostle Paul states: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." The NIV Bible Study notes "*No one- not even one who has not heard of the Bible or of Christ — has an excuse for not honoring God, because the whole created world reveals him.*"³³

The point of this passage is that God has been clearly revealed by His creation. However, this notion would seem to be completely undermined if we also suggest that God has created the cosmos with a false appearance of history. It seems logically

³² Snoke, David PhD, *A Biblical Case For An Old Earth*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006), Chapter 2, The Scientific Case, pages 25 & 26.

³³ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Romans 1:18-20, notes, pg 1708-1709.

inconsistent to claim on the one hand, that the universe is a reliable witness and that no person has an excuse for disbelief, but then also claim on the other hand that the cosmos contains a false appearance of age and/or history. The Day/Age interpretation completely alleviates this problem.

Light on Day 1, Sun, Moon and Stars Created on Day 4:

On Day 1 Gen 1:3 notes "God said 'Let there be light,' and there was light..." However, we see on Day 4 in Gen 1:16 "God made the two great lights...he also made the stars." Traditionally, young-earth creationists have understood the sun, moon & stars to be created on Day 4. However, this conflicts with modern science and raises the question: What was the light created on Day 1 which established day and night?

Origen (c. A.D. 185-254), one of the early church fathers from the third century recognized the problem: "*Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first, the second and the third day, and the evening and morning existed without the sun, moon and stars?*"³⁴

The Hebrew verb *bara* means made, created, etc. Traditionally it is understood to mean made from nothing, created from nothing. In the Bible it is only used in connection with the activity of God. In Genesis when God creates the heavens and earth, soulish creatures, man and woman the author uses this verb *bara*.

However, in Gen1:3 when God says "Let there be light" this is the Hebrew verb *haya*. This verb means "to exist;" "to be;" "to happen;" "to come to pass." It is closely associated with the word "become." Nothing requires this to mean something new came into existence for the first time. This could simply be transforming something from one state to another.³⁵

In Gen 1:16 when the text notes God made the sun, moon and stars the author uses the Hebrew verb *asa*. The verb *asa* also means made or created but it implies made from something, created from something, fashioned from pre-existing materials.³⁶ *Asa* refers to completed action past or present. This action could have occurred on Day 4 or it could have happened at some time in the past.³⁷

One critical aspect of reading the Bible from the Day/Age position is that it should be read from the point of view of an observer on the surface of the earth. The position states the sun was created in verse 1 at the same time with "*the heavens and the*

³⁴ Lennox, John C. , *Seven Days That Divide The Word: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Chapter Three: But Is It Old? The Days Of Creation, pg 41-42.

³⁵ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 4: Creation Days 1-3, pg 49.

³⁶ Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter OF Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 7, Anchored in Scripture, Absence of Sun and Moon, pages 76-78.

³⁷ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 6: Creation Days 4-6, pg 75.

earth.” In verse 2 when we are told “*the earth was formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep*” there was an atmosphere of dust and gas covering the planet which did not allow light to penetrate and reach the surface of the earth, which is in line with modern scientific understanding.

Remember the verb *haya*, translated as “Let there be...” can mean transitioning from one state to another. So during Day 1 the atmosphere transitions to become translucent. On Day 1 light was able to pass through for the first time marking day and night on the surface, but the atmosphere was not yet transparent whereby the sun, moon & stars would be visible. Professor David Snoko notes “*Light appears, but – according to all we know from modern science – the earth was still cloudy, like the planet Venus. Light and darkness alternated as the earth turned on its axis, but the sun, moon and stars were not visible in the sky.*”³⁸

On Day 4 when God said “*Let there be lights,*” He was simply revealing the sun, moon and stars through a now transparent atmosphere. For the first time these heavenly bodies could be seen from the surface of the earth. The Hebrew verb *asa*, translated as “made,” helps to confirm this light as previously existing, not a new creation made from nothing.

Gen 1:14-16 states “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth’... 16 God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.
NIV”

In regard to these heavenly bodies we see the questions of why, by whom and when are addressed:

- *Why?* – “to separate day from night and ...serve as signs to mark seasons, days and years.”
- *By Whom?* – God. “God made the two great lights and...He also made the stars.”
- *When?* – In verse 16 the text says “God made the two great lights.” As noted previously the Hebrew verb *asa* is translated here as “made” and can mean completed action in the present or in the past. However, recall Day 1 notes light was already in existence and further notes day is already being separated from the night. Also note that this “light,” which appears on Day 1, seems to have all the properties of the sun in that it establishes the day and night cycle, provides warmth and photosynthesis for the plants created on Day 3 and apparently

³⁸ Snoko, David PhD, *A Biblical Case For An Old Earth*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006), Chapter 7: Interpreting Genesis 1 & 2, pg 139.

sustains the earth's orbital stability which we know to be an essential requirement for life.³⁹

The fact that this light on Day 1 seems to have all the properties of the sun strongly suggests the sun was already in existence and implies that the "when" of its creation was in the past. Professor John Lennox notes "*It is, surely, the purpose of the sun, moon, and stars that is being emphasized in day 4, not how and when they came into being.*"⁴⁰

So in verse 14 when God says "Let there be lights..." this is the first time they would have been revealed to any life forms on earth, and in verse 16 when it says "God made the two great lights..." this is referring back to their creation, stressing that they owe their existence to God. Most Bible scholars agree that the author is emphasizing these heavenly bodies were created by God and are not gods themselves, implying the sun, moon and stars were not to be worshiped. This understanding was in stark contrast to the surrounding nations and especially Egypt from whence the Israelites had come.

Theologian Krista Bontrager summarizes "*Taking all of these factors into account, the best explanation is that the Sun, Moon, and stars were, in fact, created before Day 4, most likely back in Genesis 1:1 when God created the 'heavens.'* This interpretation stays true to the Hebrew text while also accommodating the data from the record of nature."⁴¹

Plant Creation Contradiction?:

Gen 2:4-7: 4...When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens — 5 and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth^d and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth^d...7 the Lord God formed the man..."

The New American Commentary details the problem. "*How 2:5-6 relates to the cosmological account of chap. 1 is perplexing for commentators. Some, assuming two distinct accounts, consider vv. 5-6 a second attempt (J source) to describe the chaos of 1:2. Other scholars see vv. 5-6 as a reference to overall vegetation created on day three (1:11-12); consequently this means the order of creation differs with chap. 1 according to which vegetation antedates the creation of human life on day six.*"⁴²

In Genesis 1 you have the creation of plants on Day 3, but In Genesis 2, believed to be describing Day 6, you have no shrubs or plants upon the earth. How do we reconcile

³⁹ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 6: Creation Days 4-6, pg 75.

⁴⁰ *Seven Days That Divide The Word: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, Lennox, John C. (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Chapter Five: The Message Of Genesis 1, pg 105

⁴¹ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 6: Creation Days 4-6, pg 76.

⁴² *The New American Commentary*, Copyright © 1994-2007 by B & H Publishing Group. The PC Study Bible Gen 2:5-6

this? Earlier I had noted that some Bible critics have argued that Genesis 1 & 2 are two different creation accounts. They will often use this passage as case in point.

On the surface this seems to be a complete contradiction. However, once again, I believe the Day/Age position offers reconciliation.

In order to understand this, we have to first establish the context of this passage. You will note that after the word "earth" there is a small letter indicating a footnote. The NIV Study Bible notes "*or land.*" It is pointing out that this Hebrew word *eretz*, translated here as the earth, could also be translated as the "land." This word *eretz* is in fact translated as land in multiple places throughout Genesis. For example, on Day 3 when it notes "*the land*" producing the vegetation, it is this Hebrew word *eretz* which is used..

Since the Genesis 2 account is dealing with the establishment of the Garden of Eden and events that transpire in this specific location, Day/Age proponents argue that the word "land" should be the correct interpretation. The passage is not saying that there were no plants or shrubs upon the whole earth. It is talking about this specific geographical location, the land where the Garden of Eden was to be placed. This is the first point.

Furthermore, from the Day/Age perspective, we are not limited to the creation days being confined to 24-hour periods. There certainly could have been an expanse of time existing between creation Days 3 and 6, which actually seems to make more sense of this passage. Professor David Snoke notes "...if the land had emerged from the waters just three days earlier (assuming that these events happen on Day 6, and the land appeared from under the waters on Day 3 in the *young-earth view*), then it hardly makes any sense that the land would be dry and infertile."⁴³

From the Day/Age perspective, this "land" could have existed long enough for the establishment of seasons. This terrain in Mesopotamia would have experienced a dry season and rainy season, much like is experienced today. Therefore, this time when there was no shrub or plant, could be referring to this parcel of land which was just coming out of the dry season before the rains came.

I think C. John Collins summarizes the position well "*We are then able to understand just what Genesis 2:5-8 means; in some land, at the end of the dry season, when the "mist" (or rain cloud) was rising to begin the rains, God formed the first man; he then planted a garden in Eden and moved man there. Some time after that he made woman.*

This way of reading Genesis 2:5-8 has the advantages of (1) following directly from the discourse relations; (2) using ordinary meanings of words; and (3) making it easy to harmonize Genesis 2:4-25 with the sixth day of Genesis 1. But it also has a strong impact on the amount of time that must have been involved. If the time of year and the absence of man are the reasons for why the plants were 'not yet in the land,' then this

⁴³ Snoke, David PhD, *A Biblical Case For An Old Earth*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006), Chapter 7: Interpreting Genesis 1 & 2, pg 153.

means that the familiar seasonal cycle was in effect; and for this to be so, the seasonal cycle must have been in operation for some number of years.”⁴⁴

Objections

“The genealogies of Genesis 5 & 11 indicate mankind has been around for only about 6,000 years.”⁴⁵

In 1642 Cambridge University Vice-Chancellor John Lightfoot analyzed the genealogies in Genesis, Exodus, I & II Kings and II Chronicles and came up with a creation date of September 17, 3828 B.C. In 1650 James Usher, Anglican Archbishop of Ireland, corrected Lightfoot’s date changing it to October 3, 4004 B.C. This date was then picked up in the margin notes of later editions of the King James Bible and 4004 B.C. became the “biblical” standard as a date for creation.⁴⁶

Day/Age proponents argue the genealogies are not a reliable tool for establishing the age of mankind for the following reasons:

Genealogies of the ancient Near East, including those found in the Bible, reflected more than specific ancestry. They had political and socio-religious purpose. The Hebrew word translated “*the son of*” could just as literally mean “*the grandson of*,” or “*descended from the line of*,” and “*the father of*” could just as literally mean “*the grandfather of*” or “*the ancestor of*.”

From the *NIV Study Bible* Gen 5:6 reads “When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father^b of Enosh.” You will note the word father has a footnote attached to it. The footnote states “*Father may mean ancestor. Also in verses 7-26.*”⁴⁷ I have a chronological Daily Bible and it footnotes the exact same thing.⁴⁸ The point is this verse (and others like it) could just as literally be interpreted Seth...became the *grandfather* of Enosh, or Seth...became the *ancestor* of Enosh.

Specific known examples of “son of” or “father of” referring to ancestry, as opposed to direct paternal relations, are found elsewhere in the Bible. For instance Matthew 1:1 “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:” Here is an example where Jesus is called the son of David, meaning King David, who lived 1,000 years earlier, and either Jesus or David is being called the son of Abraham, who lived over 2,000 years before Christ. The footnote in the *NIV Study Bible* notes

⁴⁴ Collins, John C., *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), Chapter 5, Genesis 2:4-25: The Garden Of Eden. pg 111.

⁴⁵ Sarfati, Jonathan Ph.D., *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of “Progressive Creationism” (Billions of Years)*, As Popularized by Astronomer Hugh Ross, (Green Forest, AR; Master Books, 2004) Conclusion and Summary, pg 393.

⁴⁶ Ross, Hugh Ph.D., *A Matter OF Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 2, The Gathering Storm, pages 21-22

⁴⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), page 13

⁴⁸ *The Daily Bible* : In Chronological Order 365 Daily Readings, NIV Version, page 10

"Because Matthew was writing to the Jews, it was important to identify Jesus in this way."⁴⁹ Matthew does not mean Jesus is the "biological son of," but rather he "descended from the line of" King David. In fact, in Mathew, Mark and Luke, Jesus is called the "son of David" at least 16 times.

Another example can be seen elsewhere in Matthew's genealogy: 1:8 "Jehoram the father of Uzziah." Compare this to the genealogy in II Chronicles 21:4-26:33 and you will find that three generations are omitted from Matthew's genealogy.

2 Chron 21:20 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, NIV
2 Chron 22:1 Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. NIV
2 Chron 22:11 Joash son of Ahaziah NIV
2 Chron 24:27 Amaziah his (Joash's) son succeeded him as king. NIV
2 Chron 26:1 Judah took Uzziah,...and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. NIV

In the Introduction to I Chronicles, *The NIV Study Bible* confirms that genealogies served a variety of functions. It notes "*The most common type of fluidity in Biblical materials is telescoping, the omission of names from the list. Unimportant names are left out in order to relate an individual to a prominent ancestor, or possibly to achieve the desired number of names in the genealogy. Some Biblical genealogies, for example, omit names to achieve multiples of 7: For the period from David to the exile Matthew gives 14 generations (2 times 7), while Luke gives 21 (3 times 7), and the same authors give similar multiples of 7 for the period from the exile to Jesus (Mt 1:1-17, Lk 3:23-38).*"⁵⁰

The genealogies in the Bible are a literary device. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus lists three sets of 14 names. The genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 list two sets of 10 names. The genealogies were not meant to be an exhaustive, complete line of descent. Certain names were chosen for the political and literary purpose of the author. Again, the following is a footnote from *The NIV Study Bible* in regard to the genealogy of Gen 5 "*The fact that there are exactly ten names in the Gen 5 list (as in the genealogy of 11:10-26) makes it likely that it includes gaps, the lengths of which may be summarized in large numbers.*"⁵¹

The (chronological) Daily Bible that I mentioned previously has a young-earth disposition. However, it has the following commentary in regard to the first genealogy presented in Genesis 5 "*It is altogether possible that this genealogical listing and others to follow may not list every successive generation, and therefore may omit hundreds of years of mankind's history. Such would be the case, for example, if "son" were used in*

⁴⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Matthew 1:1 footnote, page 1436

⁵⁰ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Introduction: I Chronicles, page 575.

⁵¹ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Gen 5:5 footnote, page 13

reference to a grandson or an even more remote descendant, as is sometimes seen in later historical records. Should that be the case, there would be great difficulty in assigning specific dates to such major events as the creation of first man and woman, or the great flood which will come in the days of Noah.”⁵²

C. John Collins summarizes “We are on sound footing, then, if we conclude Moses’ genealogy is compressed, or selective, giving representatives in the line of descent. A further indication...is the simple fact that no biblical author ever reckons up a length of time based on genealogies. From this we may conclude that if we use a biblical genealogy to compute a length of time, we are failing to cooperate with the kind of communicative act that the genealogies perform.”⁵³

Evenings and Mornings: “...the use of the “evening and morning” formula is a hard brake for those views that propose nonliteral readings. Taking those words as they were intended to be taken leads to only one sound conclusion on the length of the days...” (meaning they are 24-hour days)⁵⁴

On the surface this use of evening and morning would seem to imply “solar” days, but this phrasing has troubled Bible scholars for centuries. Keep in mind that from a young-earth perspective, the sun wasn’t created until Day 4. How can you have 3 solar days before the sun had been created? To repeat a quote from before, Origen (c. A.D. 185-254) noted: “Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first, the second and the third day, and the evening and morning existed without the sun, moon and stars?”⁵⁵

Professor T. David Gordon adds “Genesis 1 goes out of its way to indicate that there were three “days” even before there ever was a sun, suggesting that however the “days” were measured, it had nothing to do with the earth’s rotation vis-à-vis the sun.”⁵⁶ This should be the first clue these are not normal solar days.

In addition, the phrasing of “evening and morning” is also most curious. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament a 24-hour period is exclusively marked with either “evening to evening” or “morning to morning”. This is the only place in the Bible where “evening and morning” is used in this fashion.⁵⁷

⁵² *The Daily Bible: In Chronological Order 365 Daily Readings*, NIV Version, Descendants from Adam to Noah, page 9

⁵³ Collins, John C., *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), Chapter 7, Genesis 4:1-26; After Eden. pg 206-207.

⁵⁴ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, The 24-Hour Reply, page 98.

⁵⁵ Lennox, John C., *Seven Days That Divide The Word: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Chapter Three: But Is It Old? The Days Of Creation, pg 41-42.

⁵⁶ Gordon, T. David, *Creation “Days” in Genesis*, essay, <http://www.tdgordon.net/theology/>, click on “Creation Days” (last accessed June 2013)

⁵⁷ Ross, Hugh PhD., *A Matter Of Days: Resolving A Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO; Navpress 2004), Chapter 7 Anchored in Scripture, Day Markers, page 76.

Theologian Krista Bontrager notes “If the author was trying to describe a 24-hour period, you’d expect the text to say “morning to morning” or “evening to evening” (such as the Jewish reckoning of a “day”). Even if the phrase said “morning to evening,” it would correspond to what we would associate as being normal “work hours.” But by putting this construction as “evening and morning” the author is drawing the reader’s attention to the nighttime, when a worker would normally rest from labor. This is why many Old Testament scholars think the sundown-to-sunrise formula is intended to act as a symbolic unit to mark the end of one creation stage before the dawn of the next, as opposed to functioning as an indication of the duration of the creation “days.”⁵⁸

Therefore, the refrain of “evening and morning” can be seen as a figure of speech, or an idiomatic expression meant to convey the end of each creation day before the dawn of the next. An idiom is “an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meanings of its constitutional elements.”⁵⁹ For example, in one edition of *The Austin American Statesman* the headline read “Twilight falls on Shady Grove.”⁶⁰ The article went on to detail the end of the Shady Grove motor-home park as they were closing it down in order to build condos.

In his book titled *Figures of Speech in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger lists over 150 examples found in the first 11 chapters of Genesis alone.⁶¹ For example, in Genesis 3 the snake is widely recognized as being symbolic of Satan; the punishments of *crawling on his belly* and *eating the dust of the ground* are understood as symbolic idiomatic expressions as well. Chapter 4 begins with “Adam knew Eve” or “lay with his wife” understood to mean Adam had sexual relations with Eve. Chapter 4 notes “Abel’s blood crying out to God from the ground.” This again is obviously an idiomatic, figure of speech.

Psalm 90 is the only psalm attributed to Moses. In it he notes “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning – though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.”⁶²

Professor David Snoke notes in regard to this passage “...here we see Moses specifically using a “day” and “morning and evening” to refer to indefinite periods that are all passing away. The morning is the time period when humans flourish, and the evening is the time period when they fade. Grass doesn’t literally spring up in the morning and wither on the same day...”⁶³ Moses is traditionally believed to be the author of Genesis as well, so this phrasing is very noteworthy.

⁵⁸ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 5: A Short Interlude, pg 63.

⁵⁹ www.dictionary.com, “idiom,” first definition (last accessed May 2012)

⁶⁰ April 1, 2008, Metro and State Section front page

⁶¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, PC Study Bible Software, Genesis 1-2 – Poetic? Figurative? Historical?

⁶² Psalm 90:4-6, NIV

⁶³ Snoke, David PhD, *A Biblical Case For An Old Earth*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006), Chapter 7: Interpreting Genesis 1 & 2, pg 143.

Again C. John Collins summarizes “*The evening followed by the morning is not the first day. It’s the end of the first day. What happens in between is nighttime, and in the culture of ancient Israel, nighttime is when a worker rested. Genesis 1 is giving us a picture of God as a workman going through his work week. And then He has His Sabbath rest. The interest in these days is not in their length, but in the fact they’re God’s workdays. They form a pattern for human beings in our rhythm of work and rest.*”⁶⁴

This quote actually forms an excellent segue into our final objection.

“The history of commentary on the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20 and elsewhere corroborates yet again that the Old Testament writers understood the creation days as normal days.”⁶⁵

Exodus 20:8-11 – “8 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.....11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

First of all, as we learned in the case of Galileo and geocentrism, even if the history of commentary holds one view, *that alone* doesn’t mean it is correct. In addition to geocentrism, there are numerous examples of archaeological discoveries helping us to better define obscure biblical Hebrew words. We should honor and respect the well thought-out, traditional interpretations of our church fathers and we should not easily discard them, but we also need to recognize there are instances where future discovery has helped to illuminate a clearer and more accurate understanding of scripture.

The analogy used in Exodus 20 could be understood as “*equal to*” or “*identical to*,” but it could also just as accurately be understood as “*analogous to*” or “*similar to*.” In order to understand which interpretation is the intended meaning of the author, we should ask: Is God’s creation week equal to or identical to our work week or merely analogous to? The answer is, of course: its only analogous to.

John Lennox elaborates “...*there were not only similarities between God’s creation week and our work week, but also obvious differences. God’s work week happened once; ours is repeated. God’s creative activity is very different from ours; God does not need rest as we do; and so on. So it is not possible to draw straight lines from Genesis to our working week. God’s week is a pattern for ours, but it is not identical. Thus*

⁶⁴ Bontrager, Krista Kay, *The Bigger Picture On Creation*, (Pasadena, CA: Reason To Believe, 2008), Lesson 5: A Short Interlude, pg 64.

⁶⁵ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, *The 24-Hour View*, page 37.

Exodus 20:8-11 does not demand that the days of Genesis 1 be the days of a single week, although it could of course be interpreted that way."⁶⁶

Many Day/Age proponents point to Leviticus 25:2-4 to further bolster the argument.

Leviticus 25:2-4 "When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the Lord."

Similar to God's six work periods of creation (*however long they lasted*) and one of rest, man is to have six work periods (*24-hour days*) and observe one of rest. Again, similarly, the land is to have six work periods (*years*) and then observe one of rest. God is establishing that there is a time to work and a time to rest. The emphasis of the Fourth Commandment is to establish the Sabbath, a time of rest. The time it takes for the land is different from that of man. The time it takes for man is different from that of God. God may not need the rest, but he set the example for our (*man and earth*) benefit.

Dr. Hugh Ross & Gleason Archer summarize "*Clearly, the emphasis in Exodus 20 is on the pattern of work and rest, a ratio of six to one, not on the length of the creation days*"⁶⁷ *...We hold...that verse 9 addresses the workweek of humans (seven 24-hour days), verse 11 addresses the workweek of God (seven long periods), and Leviticus 25:4 addresses the workweek of farm lands (seven years).*"⁶⁸

Again, the fact that the author of Hebrews seems to explicitly state God's Sabbath "day," or His Sabbath rest continues to this day, seems to confirm that God's Sabbath rest is not meant to equate to or be identical to the Sabbath rest we are commanded to observe in the Fourth Commandment.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to leave you with a quote from Robert Newman. Newman is the professor of New Testament at Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, PA. Mr. Newman represented the "old-earth" interpretation in the point – counterpoint book *Three Views On Creation And Evolution*. He noted: "*There is a strong similarity between the theological method and scientific method...In both, the data should take priority over theory (the text of scripture over personal or institutional doctrine)...we need to constantly be aware that our theorizing may have misunderstood or improperly*

⁶⁶ Lennox, John C., *Seven Days That Divide The Word: The Beginning According To Genesis And Science*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), Chapter Three: But Is It Old? The Days Of Creation, pg 41-42.

⁶⁷ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer, The Day-Age View, pg 150.

⁶⁸ *The G3N3SIS Debate: Three Views On The Days Of Creation*, Edited by David G. Hagopian, (Mission Viejo, CA, Crux Press, 2001), Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer, The Day-Age Response, pg 75-76.

*organized the data. So we need to be on the lookout for evidence of this, rather than devising interpretive principles that effectively explain away recalcitrant data. This is to say that both theological method and scientific method should be truth-seeking rather than self affirming in one way or another...Neither nature nor Scripture is constructed to keep people from coming to the truth, but rather to lead them to it."*⁶⁹

As Bible students, we should not be driven by science, nor should we be driven by a desire to maintain tradition. In all circumstances we should be driven by the desire to know the truth. If we are genuinely seeking the truth, then we should be humble enough to accept superior evidence when presented. Many refuse to even listen to perspectives which threaten their cherished, traditional interpretations. And for some, these beloved interpretations themselves are worshiped in the same way one might worship a deity.

All interpretations of Genesis have their strengths and difficulties. I switched to the Day/Age interpretation because I believe overall it is the more robust interpretation with the greatest explanatory power and the fewest weaknesses.

⁶⁹ *Three Views On Creation And Evolution*, J.P. Moreland & John Mark Reynolds, General Editors, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1999), Robert C. Newman, *Old Earth (Progressive) Creationism*, page 124-125.

Appendix

Psalm 104:

Psalm 104 is widely recognized as a poem praising God's creation and an elaboration on the creation events detailed in Genesis. The NIV Study Bible study notes it is "A hymn to the Creator. Obviously influenced by Genesis 1..."¹ The Bible Exposition Commentary notes: "The writer of the psalm certainly had Gen 1 in mind when he wrote."² Keil & Delitzsch commentary notes: "The Psalm is altogether an echo of the... (history of the seven days of creation) in Gen 1:1 – 2:3."³ Theologian Krista Kay Bontrager notes "Psalm 104 offers a poetic meditation on key themes presented in the opening chapter of the Bible... Psalm 104 also presents a unique parallel passage to Genesis 1. In some cases it offers a broader description of the events that transpired on certain creation days."⁴

With numerous parallels between this psalm and Genesis 1, it offers a glimpse into the perspective of another biblical author in regard to the proper interpretation of Genesis. Although the language is poetic, there are several parts of the psalm which fit much more comfortably within the Day/Age interpretation of Genesis. I would like to highlight one which bears directly on how we should interpret the length of days of Genesis.

In verses 29 and 30 the psalmist is referencing the fact that the earth is full of His creatures. He notes: "29 When you hide your face, they (the creatures) are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust, 30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth."

This would seem to be an elaboration on the six days of creation for the following reasons: (1) The psalmist is consistently referring back to the events of Genesis 1 throughout this psalm, (2) He uses the Hebrew verb *bara* for "created," which is used on days 5 and 6, (3) he describes the dying creatures "return(ing) to the dust" (Genesis notes they created from the dust on day 6) and (4) he refers to God creating more creatures to renew the face of the earth (we understand God ceased from creating on day 7 when he rested). Collectively these verses make the most sense if describing Genesis 1.

Theologian Krista Kay Bontrager acknowledges how this imagery fits well with what science tells us in regard to the history of life on earth. "Psalm 104:29-30 describes the death and renewal of these creatures... Throughout the fossil record, time and time again, mass extinctions are followed immediately by mass origination events... The

¹ *The NIV Study Bible*, 10th Anniversary Edition (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Psalm 104 notes, pg 888.

² PC Study Bible, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*: Introduction to Psalm 104

³ PC Study Bible, Keil & Delitzsch Commentary, Hymn in honor of the God of the Seven Days, Introduction to Psalm 104.

⁴ Bontrager, Krista Kay and Dr. Rana, Fazale, *Psalm 104: In Wisdom You Made Them All*, (Glendora, CA; Reasons To Believe, 2013), Meet Psalm 104, page 11.

proximity between mass extinction and mass origination events closely resembles the pattern in Psalm 104:29-30.”⁵

This Psalter’s poetic description of the existence, death and renewal of creatures on earth mirrors our scientific understanding and fits very naturally within the Day/Age interpretation which can accommodate these events over an expanse of time. The 24-hour day interpretation genuinely struggles to make sense of this passage.

⁵ Bontrager, Krista Kay and Dr. Rana, Fazale, *Psalm 104: In Wisdom You Made Them All*, (Glendora, CA; Reasons To Believe, 2013), Unit 5: Verses 24-30, page 44 & 47.

APPENDIX B

WORD STUDIES IN GENESIS 1

The English translation of Genesis 1 presented below is taken from the *New International Version*. Superscripts to the right of certain words key to the list of definitions that follows. Lexical definitions are taken from four different sources.¹⁻⁴

1. In the beginning God¹ created² the heavens⁵ and the earth.²⁰
2. Now the earth²⁰ was formless⁶ and empty,⁷ darkness was over the surface of the deep,⁸ and the Spirit⁹ of God¹ was hovering²¹ over the waters.
3. And God¹ said, "Let there be³ light," and there was light.
4. God¹ saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.
5. God¹ called the light "day"¹⁹ and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the first day.¹⁹
6. And God¹ said, "Let there be³ an expanse¹⁰ between the waters to separate water from water."
7. So God¹ made⁴ the expanse¹⁰ and separated the water under the expanse¹⁰ from the water above it. And it was so.
8. God¹ called the expanse¹⁰ "sky."⁵ And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the second day.¹⁹
9. And God¹ said, "Let the water under the sky⁵ be³ gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear."²⁴ And it was so.
10. God¹ called the dry ground "land" and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God¹ saw that it was good.
11. Then God¹ said, "Let the land produce²⁵ vegetation:²⁶ seed¹¹-bearing plants²⁹ and trees¹² on the land that bear fruit¹³ with seed¹¹ in it, according to their various kinds."²⁷ And it was so.

12. The land produced²⁸ vegetation:²⁶ plants²⁹ bearing seed¹¹ according to their kinds²⁷ and trees¹² bearing fruit¹³ with seed¹¹ in it according to their kinds.²⁷ And God¹ saw that it was good.
13. And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the third day.¹⁹
14. And God¹ said, “Let there be ³ lights³⁰ in the expanse¹⁰ of the sky⁵ to separate the day¹⁹ from the night, and let them serve as signs³¹ to mark seasons and days¹⁹ and years.
15. And let there be³ lights³⁰ in the expanse¹⁰ of the sky⁵ to give light on the earth.”²⁰ And it was so.
16. God¹ made⁴ two great lights³⁰—the greater light³⁰ to govern the day¹⁹ and the lesser light³⁰ to govern the night. He also made⁴ the stars.
17. God¹ set¹⁴ them in the expanse¹⁰ of the sky⁵ to give light on the earth,²⁰
18. to govern the day¹⁹ and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God¹ saw that it was good.
19. And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the fourth day.¹⁹
20. And God¹ said, “Let the water teem with living creatures,¹⁵ and let birds fly above the earth²⁰ across the expanse¹⁰ of the sky.”⁵
21. So God¹ created² the great creatures¹⁶ of the sea and every living¹⁷ and moving thing¹⁷ with which the water teems, according to their kinds,²⁷ and every winged bird according to its kind.²⁷ And God¹ saw that it was good.
22. God¹ blessed them and said, “Be³ fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”²⁰
23. And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the fifth day.¹⁹
24. And God¹ said, “Let the land produce²⁸ living creatures¹⁷ according to their kinds:²⁷ livestock,³² creatures that move³³ that move along the ground, and wild animals,³⁴ each according to its kind.”²⁷ And it was so.
25. God¹ made⁴ the wild animals³⁴ according to their kinds,²⁷ the livestock³² according to their kinds,²⁷ and all the creatures that move³³ along the ground according to their kinds.²⁷ And God¹ saw that it was good.
26. Then God¹ said, “Let us make⁴ man¹⁸ in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock,³² over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move³³ along the ground.”
27. So God¹ created² man¹⁸ in his own image, in the image of God¹ he created² him; male and female he created them.
28. God¹ blessed them and said to them, “Be³ fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth²⁰ and subdue³⁵ it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature³⁴ that moves of the ground.”

29. Then God¹ said, "I give you every seed¹¹-bearing plant²⁹ of the face of the whole earth²⁰ and every tree that has fruit with seed¹¹ in it. They will be yours for food.

30. And to all the beasts³⁴ of the earth²⁰ and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move³³ on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant²⁹ for food." And it was so.

31. God¹ saw all that He had made,⁴ and it was very good. And there was evening,²² and there was morning²³—the sixth day.¹⁹ Thus the heavens⁵ and the earth²⁰ were completed in all their vast array.

Definitions

1. **'elohim** (plural of 'eloah): the deity; the supreme Being; the true God—a compound word composed of El (the strong one), and Alah (to bind oneself by an oath); hence, Elohiym = the mighty and faithful one—a uni-plural noun; thus, Elohiym latently implies the Trinity—the only name used for God in Genesis 1; this name is used about 2,500 times in the Old Testament.
2. **bara'**: bring forth something that is radically new; produce that which is new, extraordinary, and/or epochal; produce through supernatural activity. God is always the subject of this verb.
3. **haya**: become (when coupled with the Hebrew preposition *l*); cause to appear or arise; cause to be made or done; come into existence; come to pass; make into something.
4. **'asa**: produce; manufacture; fabricate.
5. **shamayim** (pl), **shameh** (sing): visible dome of the sky above and in which the clouds move; the realm in which the celestial bodies move; the spiritual realm in which God and the angels dwell and operate—with respect to the above definitions, the Hebrews referred to the three heavens (cf. II Cor. 12:2); whenever *shamayim* is used with the *erets* (earth), as in 1:1, the combination refers to the entire physical universe.
6. **tohu**: desolate; worthless; wasteness; useless; incapable of being utilized; unformed.
7. **bohu**: empty; void; devoid of existence.
8. **tehom**: a great mass of water; the oceans and the seas.
9. **ruah**: spirit; breath; wind—in conjunction with *Elohim* refers to the Holy Spirit.
10. **raqia'**: (apparently) visible dome of the sky; (technically, the atmosphere immediately above the surface of the earth).
11. **zera'**: embryos of plants, trees, grasses, etc., i.e., the embryos of any plant species.
12. **'es**: any large plant containing woody fiber.
13. **peri**: food and/or embryos produced by any living thing.

14. **natan**: set; put; place; appoint; bring forth; apply; ascribe; set forth; send out; show; trust; bestow; cause to appear; charge; commit; deliver.
15. **sheres**: swarm of small or minute animals.
16. **tanniym**: great or large sea animal; monster.
17. **nepesh**: vital animals, i.e. animals that clearly manifest the soulish attributes of mind, will, and emotion.
18. **'adam**: human being; the human race; i.e., animals that clearly manifest spirit attributes. NOTE: there is no evidence for a spirit dimension for the pre-Adamic hominids.
19. **yôm**: sunrise to sunset; sunset to sunset; a space of time (defined by an associated term); an age; time or period (without any reference to solar days).
20. **'eres**: the planet Earth; a land, a country, or a continent; lands, countries, kingdoms, or regions.
21. **rahap**: to brood over, cherishing and vivifying; to be tenderly affected; to be moved.
22. **'ereb**: the beginning of darkness; dusk, twilight, or nightfall; closing, ending, or completion.
23. **boqer**: the breaking forth of light; dawn, daybreak, or morning; dawning, beginning, or origin.
24. **ra' a**: be seen; appear; show forth, cause one to see; to be perceived or beheld; to be considered.
25. **dasha'**: to bring forth herbage; to sprout; to bring forth.
26. **deshe'**: new vegetation; young plants.
27. **min**: species; life-form.
28. **yasa'**: germinate, bring forth; produce; spring forth; promulgate; to cause to come forth; issue out; proceed.
29. **'eseb**: green plant(s).
30. **ma'or**: a luminous body; brightness; light.
31. **'ot**: signal; sign, measuring mark; token, omen; evidence.
32. **behemot**: large land quadruped.
33. **remes**: rapidly moving vertebrates; rodents and/or reptiles.
34. **hay**: wild animals; a multitude or mob; that which is lively or fresh.
35. **kabash**: subject; subdue; subjugate.

Christian Approaches to Interpreting Genesis 1

Compiled by Krista Bontrager

The following is one attempt at summarizing the major views of Genesis 1 that are currently competing in evangelical churches. This document is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of the issues, but rather a brief introduction to the key contenders. Some of the views exclude others, while some overlap in certain areas. For more information about any of these views and sources used in the compilation of this document, please consult the bibliography on the final page.

YOUNG-EARTH CREATIONISM

The young-earth creationist view (also called “creationism,” “creation science,” the “24 hour view,” the “calendar-day view,” “recent creationism,” or the “traditional view”) interprets the creation week as six consecutive 24-hour periods, followed by a 24-hour Sabbath. By working backward through the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11, the age of the earth can be calculated to between 6,000 and 10,000 years old. Young-earth creationists also typically believe that Noah’s flood covered the earth a few thousand years ago with water to a depth of more than twenty feet above the highest mountains. This single event caused the continents to separate, and it accounts for most of the earth’s geology.

Cited Support:

1. “Most natural” English reading of Genesis 1.
2. The phrase “morning” and “evening” specifies the length of the “day.”
3. Length of creation days compared to a literal workweek in Exodus 20:11 (used in combination with John 5:46-47).
4. Most commonly held understanding of creation both in Jewish and Christian history.
5. Not dependant on any particular scientific perspective.

Challenges:

1. Lack of mainstream scientific evidence
2. Seems unable to account for strong scientific evidence pointing to an ancient age.
3. Rests on a frequent appeal to an “appearance of age” or “mature creation” argument (e.g. Since Adam and Eve were created as mature adults, so the rest of creation could have been created to “look” old, but actually be young).
4. The events on Day 6 (Genesis 2) seem to imply it would have taken longer than 24 hours.

Major Contemporary Advocates:

1. John Mark Reynolds (probably one of the most fair and intellectually honest YECs)
2. Danny Faulkner
3. Paul Nelson at the Discovery Institute
4. Kurt Wise
5. Henry and John Morris at the Institute for Creation Research
6. Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis
7. John MacArthur
8. D. James Kennedy
9. Carl Baugh (although some of his research has been discredited by other young-earth creationists)
10. Kent Hovind (although some of his research has been discredited by other young-earth creationists)
11. Almost any "creation science" textbook used in Christian schools or in the homeschool community (e.g. Bob Jones Publishing, A Beka).
12. This view is largely popular within fundamentalist churches.

OLD-EARTH CREATIONISM

Genesis 1 describes various periods of time in which God repeatedly and miraculously intervened in order to create various life forms and prepare the earth to be a suitable habitat for humanity.

Basic Tenets:

1. The Universe/Earth is old = Accepts the mainstream view for the age of the universe (~13.7 billion years old) and the earth (~4.85 billion years old).
2. Creation =
 - Unguided (naturalistic) evolution is not capable of producing the features we see in our universe -- not the universe itself, life, its variety, and not humankind.
 - God-directed evolution (theistic evolution) is not the way God chose to create.
3. Progressive = God's creation miracles occurred in a series of steps over a long period of time in which God established each level of the environment before proceeding to the next level.

Cited Support:

1. Generally views biblical story of creation as real history, not myth.
2. Avoids conflict with modern science over the age of the earth.
3. Has legitimate biblical support:
 - The Hebrew allows the word *yom* ("day") to be legitimately interpreted as a long period of time (e.g. "Day of the LORD" in Isaiah 11:10-11).
 - Use of the Hebrew word *yom* ("day") to refer to the entire creation week in Genesis 2:4.

- The absence of the refrain of the six days (e.g. “and there was evening, and there was morning, the first day”) at the end of the seventh day is most easily explained as indicating that the day did not end. Hence, this is not an “ordinary” day.
- Phrase “evening” and “morning” signals the end of each creation day, not its length.
- Phrase “evening and morning, *n*th day” brackets a 12-hour period (not 24).
- Events on Day 6 described in Genesis 2 appear to take longer than 24 hours.
- Genesis 2:5 implies that God used “ordinary providence” to cause the plants to grow (namely through rainfall). Such processes imply that Creation Day 6 took longer than a mere 24-hours.
- Use of the word “generations” (*toledot*) to describe the entire creation week fits better with a view that interprets the “days” as long periods of time.
- Comports with biblical statements that the earth is “ancient.” [2 Peter 3:5 - ancient Earth; Deut. 33:15 - ancient mountains; Genesis 49:26 - ancient mountains; Habakkuk 3:6 - ancient mountains; Judges 5:21 - ancient rivers; Psalm 68:33 - ancient skies]

Challenges:

1. Critics argue that Exodus 20:11 gives an inspired interpretation of the length of the work of creation.
2. Some Christians object to billions of years of plant and animal death and suffering before the fall of Adam on the basis of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, 26.
3. Contradicts the commonly held view in Jewish and Christian history of the “days” being 24 hours.
4. Does the late arrival of Old-Earth creationism mean that it is an accommodation to evolution?

FOUR VARIETIES OF OLD-EARTH CREATIONISM:

1. GAP THEORY: This position asserts that there is a gap of millions of years, possibly even billions, between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. According to this theory, God made an earlier creation, but a rebellion (probably in connection with Satan’s rebellion) caused God to judge the earth so that it “became” formless and void. What we read then in Genesis 1:3-2:3 is actually the *second* creation of God. The “days” are interpreted either as 24-hour periods or as long ages, depending on the variety of the gap theory in question.

Cited Support & Advantages:

1. Relies primarily on an alternative translation for the Hebrew word *haya* (Genesis 1:2) as “And the earth *became* formless (*tohu*) and void (*bohu*)...”
2. Darkness (Genesis 1:2) is used elsewhere in the Old Testament as a sign of God’s judgment.

3. The Hebrew words “formless (*tohu*)” and “void (*bohu*)” appear in Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 to refer to places that have suffered the desolating consequences of God’s judgment.
4. Attempts to accommodate the scientific evidence that the earth is old.

Challenges:

1. Many contemporary Old Testament scholars say that the grammar of Genesis 1:2 does not offer strong evidence for interpreting Genesis 1:2 as, “And the earth became formless and void.”
2. There is no verse in Scripture that explicitly mentions an earlier creation.
3. The 24-hour version of the gap theory has the same scientific hurdles as the young-earth position. When did the fossil record occur – before or after Genesis 1:2?

Major Advocates:

1. Thomas Chalmers (as early as 1814)
2. Scofield Reference Bible
3. Jack Hayford
4. Robert Saucy at Talbot School of Theology

2. DAY-AGE CREATIONISM: According to the day-age view (sometimes also called, progressive creationism or concordist view), the days of Genesis 1 should be understood as seven sequential, finite but unspecified long periods of time. The creation week describes events from the point of view of an observer standing on the surface of the earth, as the Creator prepares it to become the habitation for humanity.

Cited Support:

1. See “Cited Support” for “Old-Earth Creationism” above.
2. The use of the terms Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, etc., seem to imply a chronological sequence.

Challenges:

1. See “Challenges” for “Old-Earth Creationism” above.
2. If taken to an extreme, it can minimize the importance of the historical/cultural context of Genesis and turn the Bible into a scientific textbook.
3. Some say that the sequence of Genesis 1 does not exactly correspond with the scientific record, unless the Biblical interpreter engages in some hermeneutical “gymnastics.”
 - Flowering shrubs and full-grown trees (Day 2) come after the creation of sea animals (Day 5) according to the scientific record.
 - Sun, moon, and stars (Day 4) appear long before the creation of the earth (Genesis 1:2), according to the scientific record.

Major Advocates:

1. Charles Hodge
2. B.B. Warfield
3. Gleason Archer, former Professor of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
4. Walt Kaiser, President Emeritus of Gordon Conwell Seminary
5. Hugh Ross, President of Reasons To Believe

3. FRAMEWORK VIEW: The distinctive feature of the Framework view is its understanding of the author's use of the word "days" as a literary vehicle to teach that God created everything. Moses wrote Genesis 1 as a polemic against idol worship and to call God's people to covenant obedience. According to this interpretation, God's supernatural creative words or fiats are arranged topically, not chronologically. Creation events are grouped in two triads of days (see below).

Days of FormingDay 1 Light and darkness separatedDay 2 Sky

Seas

Day 3 Dry land

Vegetation

Days of FillingDay 4 LuminariesDay 5 Sea creatures

Winged creatures

Day 6 Land animals

Humans

Creation KingDay 7 Sabbath

Adam is seen as the king of the Earth (Psalm 8) while God is the King of all creation.

Cited Support & Advantages:

1. See "Cited Support" for "Old-Earth Creationism" above.
2. There seems to be a strong literary evidence for a parallelism between Days 1-3 and Days 4-6.
3. Tries to preserve the integrity of the human author's meaning and to not make the biblical text answer questions that it was never intended to answer.
4. Open to the findings of modern science over the age of the Earth and the appearance of living creatures, since no chronology is implied.
5. Used by some evangelical theistic evolutionists to biblically accommodate their view. (Some evangelicals who have strong aversion to theistic evolution could view this as a negative, or "compromise" of the Bible.)

Challenges:

1. See "Challenges" for "Old-Earth Creationism" above.
2. The use of the terms Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, etc., seem to imply a chronological sequence.
3. Sometimes there is little perceived need or rigorous effort to integrate Bible's description of creation with history.

4. Might reduce the quantity of scientific evidence we can use in evangelism.
5. Some versions of this view (such as Meredith Klein's two-story theology) are rather complex and it may legitimately be asked whether the Israelite reader would have understood the creation account in the way that Klein and others propose.

Major Advocates:

1. Meredith Klein, Westminster Theological Seminary
2. Mark Futato, Reformed Theological Seminary
3. Henri Blocher (French theologian)
4. Lee Irons
5. This view is largely popular in Reformed churches.
6. Variations of the Framework view also appear in many commentaries on Genesis.

4. ANALOGICAL DAYS: God's workdays described in Genesis 1 are analogous (but not necessarily identical) to human workdays. They set a pattern for human rhythm of work and rest. The six days represent periods of God's historical supernatural activity in preparing and populating the earth as a place for humans to live, love, work, and worship. The events described on these days are generally understood as being broadly consecutive periods of time of unspecified length. However, some of the events may overlap in part, or they may reflect logical rather than chronological criteria for grouping certain events on certain days.

Cited Support & Advantages:

1. See "Cited Support" for "Old-Earth Creationism" above.
2. When the Mosaic Law commands God's people to observe the Sabbath, it draws on the analogy between God's work for six days and then resting and human work and rest.
 - Work six days and then rest on the seventh (Exodus 20:8-11).
 - Work the land for six years and then let the land rest during the seventh year (Leviticus 25:4-6).
3. Seven and seventy are used throughout Scripture as numbers of completion.
4. Accounts for the cultural and literary structure of the Hebrew text.
5. Tries to preserve the integrity of the human author's meaning and to not make the biblical text answer questions that it was never intended to answer.
6. Open to the findings of modern science over the age of the earth and the appearance of living creatures, since no chronology is implied.

Challenges:

1. See "Challenges" for "Old-Earth Creationism" above.
2. Sometimes there is little perceived need or rigorous effort to integrate Bible's description of creation with history.
3. Might reduce the quantity of scientific evidence we can use in evangelism.

Major Advocates:

1. Hermann Bavinck, 19th century Dutch theologian, author of *In the Beginning*
2. Vern Poythress, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia
3. C. John Collins, Covenant Theological Seminary
4. W. Robert Godfrey, President of Westminster Theological Seminary, San Diego
5. This view is largely popular in Reformed churches.

**ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CREATION MYTH/LITERARY/
WORLDVIEW APPROACH**

(NOTE: The term “ANE Creation Myth/Literary/Worldview” is not an official term. It’s just one that I have coined to describe this general approach. The Framework view uses components of this method at times.)

The purpose of Genesis 1 is to lay out the distinctives of the Jewish view on God and creation in contradistinction to other ancient near eastern creation myths. Moses’ intent in Genesis 1 was to construct a true “creation myth” which was a polemic against competing myths of the ancient near east. Moses wanted the Israelites to understand that nature ought not be worshipped (like the gods of Egypt or the Canaanite god, Baal) because the covenant God of YHWH is the Creator of everything. Questions about the age of the earth or the accuracy of the historical accounts of creation are generally seen as irrelevant since those issues were not in the mind of the ancient author.

Cited Support & Advantages:

1. Tries to incorporate insights from other ancient near eastern cultures to shed light on the possible historical and cultural issues to which the author of Genesis may have been writing in opposition.
2. Tries to preserve the integrity of the human author’s meaning and to not make the biblical text answer questions that it was never intended to answer.
3. Open to the findings of modern science over the age of the earth and the appearance of living creatures, since no chronology is implied.
4. Moses wrote Genesis 1 as a polemic against idol worship and as a call to covenant obedience.

Challenges:

1. Sometimes there is little perceived need or rigorous effort to integrate Bible’s description of creation with history.
2. May unduly limit the interface between science and faith. What role would science apologetics have in demonstrating the historical accuracy of the Bible? Why should we believe the Genesis creation “myth” as being more authoritative than another other creation “myth” if it doesn’t reflect actual historical events?
3. Might reduce the quantity of scientific evidence we can use in evangelism.

Major Advocates:

1. John Walton, Wheaton College (OT scholar)
2. Bruce Waltke (OT scholar)

THEISTIC EVOLUTIONISM

God created the universe in the beginning and endowed it with the ability to unfold through natural process evolution. God used the mechanism of evolution to bring about the diversity of life forms on earth throughout its history (God-directed evolution). Some theistic evolutionists do allow for miraculous interventions at a few key moments in history, such as the origin of life or the conversion of a hominid to Adam. People vary in their opinions concerning the degree to which Genesis 1 describes actual historical events.

Cited Support:

1. Tries to keep the Bible in its historical context by not turning the Bible into a science textbook.
2. Uses mainstream scientific research.
3. Doesn't need to "fit" new discoveries with the Bible.
4. Eliminates the potentially "messy" problem that future discoveries might conflict with the Bible.

Challenges:

1. Some theistic evolutionists interpret the Genesis creation account as myth, instead of history. This might undermine the apparent Scriptural view that Adam was a real historical person (Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:12, 18; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; 1 Tim. 2:13).
2. Sometimes weak on rigorous exegesis of Genesis 1.
3. Reduces the quantity of scientific evidence we can use in evangelism.
4. Some may call into question the scientific veracity of the foundational tenants of biological evolution itself.

Popular Advocates:

1. Howard Van Till (theologian at Calvin College)
2. Michael Behe (author of Darwin's Black Box)
3. Kenneth Miller (Roman Catholic)
4. Simon Conway Morris (Prominent evolutionary biologist; also devout Anglican)
5. Francis Collins (author of, The Language of God)
6. This view is largely popular in United Methodist, United Presbyterian and Episcopalian/Anglican churches.

WHAT ABOUT “INTELLIGENT DESIGN” (ID)?

Intelligent Design is a secular approach to science that believes certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection.

ID is not a specifically Christian movement. Unlike creationism, the scientific theory of intelligent design is agnostic regarding the source of design and has no commitment to defending Genesis, the Bible or any other sacred text. Instead, ID is an effort to empirically detect whether the "apparent design" in nature acknowledged by virtually all biologists is genuine design (the product of an intelligent cause) or is simply the product of an undirected process such as natural selection acting on random variations.

ID is compatible with evolution, if one simply means "change over time," or even that living things are related by common ancestry. However, the dominant theory of evolution today is neo-Darwinism, which contends that evolution is driven by natural selection acting on random mutations, an unpredictable and purposeless process that "has no discernable direction or goal, including survival of a species." (NABT Statement on Teaching Evolution). It is this specific claim made by neo-Darwinism that intelligent design theory directly challenges.

Cited Support & Advantages:

1. ID better accounts for the evidence for certain features of the universe and of living things, which are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection
2. Because ID doesn't promote any particular religion or holy book, it can be an inclusive movement where people from a broad spectrum of beliefs are united to combat a common cultural foe: neo-Darwinian evolution.
3. Compatible with theistic evolution.
4. No need to "fit" new discoveries with the Bible.

Challenges:

1. Some Christians see ID's "big tent" strategy as a weakness because it includes everyone from young-earth creationists to theistic evolutionists to believers in extra-terrestrial intelligence.
2. Most members of the mainstream scientific community see the allowance of young-earth creationists as participants in the ID movement as a tacit endorsement of their pseudo-science and consequently as damaging to ID's intellectual credibility.
3. No scientific model, therefore seen by scientists as "religion, not science."
4. No formal connection to the Bible or Christianity or naming Jesus Christ as the Creator of the universe.

Popular Advocates:

1. Discovery Institute, Seattle, WA
2. "Teach the Controversy" campaign
3. Michael Behe (author, Darwin's Black Box)
4. Philip Johnson (author, Darwin on Trial)
5. William Dembski
6. Jonathan Wells (author, Icons of Evolution)
7. J.P. Moreland (editor, The Creation Hypothesis)
8. Videos: Unlocking the Mystery of Life, The Privileged Planet, Icons of Evolution

Works Consulted

"Report of the Creation Study Committee," PCANews.com (Atlanta, GA: Administrative Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America, July 6, 2000).

"Westminster Theological Seminary and the Days of Creation: A Brief Statement," www.wts.edu/news/creation.html (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1999).

C. John Collins, Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006).

C. John Collins, Science & Faith: Friends or Foes? (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

Discovery Institute web site; Center for Science & Culture: Frequently Asked Questions (<http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php>; accessed 01/12/08).

Millard J. Erickson, "God's Originating Work: Creation," Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, rev. 1998), pp. 365-386. (Note: Erickson defines "progressive creation" slightly different than Reasons To Believe. RTB does not promote any form of biological evolution in the animal or human realm through natural processes.)

W. Robert Godfrey, God's Pattern For Creation: A Covenantal Reading of Genesis 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2003).

Wayne Grudem, "Creation: Why, how and when did God create the universe?" Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 262-314.

David Hagopian, ed., The Genesis Debate (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Publishing, 2001).

Tremper Longman, III, How to Read Genesis (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005).

John Mark Reynolds and J.P. Moreland, eds., Three Views on Creation and Evolution (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

John Walton and Andrew E. Hill, Old Testament Today: A Journey Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), pp. 2-131.