

The Days of Creation: A Closer Look at Scripture

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Though differences of opinion exist for various doctrinal issues within Christianity, few are more divisive than controversies surrounding the days of creation and the age of the Earth. For Christians who hold the young-earth view, being true to God’s word necessitates believing the universe, Earth, and life were all created in six 24-hour days, six to ten thousand years ago. This is based on the contention that the “simplest explanation of the [Genesis 1] text... is that Moses intended the days to be thought of in the most common sense of that term.”¹ Thus, any interpretation that goes beyond a clear plain meaning of the text is considered to compromise Biblical authority and capitulate to evolutionary theories.

One difficulty with this view is most young-earth creationists interpret the Genesis creation account through the lens of the modern English Bible. While English translations can make it sound as though the creation days were 24-hour periods, textual and grammatical elements of the original Hebrew narrative suggest otherwise. Indeed, a literal reading of the Hebrew text provides compelling exegetical clues pointing to prolonged creation days. To understand why this is the case, one only needs to consider the chain of translation. From original Hebrew, the text was translated to the Greek Septuagint, to Latin Vulgate, to English Wycliffe, to English Tyndale, to the King James Version, and finally to the NIV, NASB, ESV and other modern translations. Because every language is unique, nuances of the original text have been lost in the translations leading to the modern English Bible.

The purpose of this paper is to delve deeper into the “days” of creation. This is not an attempt to denigrate the young-earth view, but to follow Paul’s admonition to “test everything and hold fast to what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). As Jerry E. White, President of The Navigators, states: “I do not condemn those who prefer a young-earth interpretation of Genesis, just as I would not condemn those who see an old-earth solution in the data.”² Both young-earth (calendar-day) creationists and old-earth (day-age³) creationists consider the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. Both believe the Genesis creation account is an historical narrative—not an allegory, myth, legend, or poetic expression. And both support an *ex nihilo* creation and reject Darwinian evolution. Thus, both views come from believers who are merely seeking truth and trying to understand God’s message in Genesis 1.

¹ J. Ligon Duncan III and David W. Hall quoted in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, David G. Hagopian, Editor (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, Inc., 2001), 31.

² White quoted in Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 9.

³ The “gap theory” (Scofield), “intermittent days view” and “framework view” are other old-earth interpretations which are rejected by this writer.

The problem lies in our external witness. Many unbelievers hold a naturalistic worldview because they cannot reconcile the Bible with science. One of the best ways to engage these skeptics is to use science apologetics to demonstrate the agreement of science and Scripture. However, the insistence on a six-to-ten thousand year old Earth undermines this effort and prevents a large segment of society from taking the Bible seriously. Two Christian apologists state this problem well:

“When the ‘young earth’ creationist insists that the biblical evidence indicates an earth only six to ten thousand years old, all communication bridges to the secular science community break down. The communication gap widens and such reactionary creationist views are labeled as ‘folk science.’ The scriptures and the gospel are consequently dismissed as meaningless.”⁴

And,

“Many non-Christians are driven away from the God of the Bible by the young-earth claims which are, frankly, ridiculous to most people who love science. It is a shame that people who love science, who would like to know the One who created the universe, reject, out of hand the Christian God, because they see Christianity as so unscientific.”⁵

For this reason, it is important we closely examine the controversy surrounding the “days” of creation. In this paper, we will look at this issue from three perspectives: (1) a brief historical overview of creationist beliefs regarding the creation days, (2) a review of the creation days with an emphasis on the textual and grammatical elements of the original Hebrew text, and (3) a discussion of the “death before the Fall” issue.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The prevailing view in the 17th century was the days of creation were 24-hour periods and the creation was approximately 6,000 years old. This 6,000 year time-frame was based on compilations of the Genesis genealogies done by Archbishop James Ussher and theologian John Lightfoot around A.D. 1650. Based on the ages of patriarchs in the genealogies, both Ussher and Lightfoot concluded the universe, earth, and life were created in 4004 B.C.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, new data from geology and paleontology established the earth was millions of years old, which conflicted greatly with Ussher and Lightfoot. In 1857, Philip Gosse (1810-1888), a British preacher and self-trained biologist, proposed a solution to this dilemma. Because Gosse felt obligated to uphold Ussher’s 4004 B.C. creation date, he proposed God had created the world with the “appearance of age”—although the creation *appeared* to be ancient, it was actually only 6,000 years old.⁶ For

⁴ “A Missionary Evaluation of the Creation-Science Controversy,” Al Hammond, from Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, 43 (September 1991), www.asa3.org

⁵ College professor quoted in John Ankerberg ministry letter, April 2004.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 304-306; Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 25, 35-38.

instance, Gosse argued trees were created with growth rings in place, coral reefs were created fully-developed, and rocks were created with fossils in them.⁷ Although Gosse's theory was rejected during his lifetime, some young-earth creationists continue to promote the "appearance of age" view, most notably in the area of astronomy.⁸

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Professor William Henry Green (1825-1900) and distinguished theologian Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) noted gaps and omissions in the Genesis genealogies. This suggested the creation was substantially older than the 6,000-year timeframe Ussher and Lightfoot had proposed. Today, many Bible scholars hold this view and believe the early Hebrew genealogies provide highlights, but not a complete rendering of each and every actual generation.⁹ For example, in his expositional commentary on Genesis, James Montgomery Boice states:

"It has been pointed out by biblical scholars, among them no less a scholar than Princeton's B.B. Warfield, that the biblical genealogies are not necessarily all-inclusive when they list a series of descendants... they may (and in fact do) leave gaps, so that a person identified as a 'son' of a person coming before him in the list need not necessarily be a literal son but may be a grandson or great-grandson. Moreover, the gaps may sometimes be quite large..."¹⁰

In the mid-20th century, young-earth creationism was rekindled by publications promoting flood geology, creation science and scientific creationism.¹¹ The chief architect of flood geology was George McCready Price (1870-1963), a Seventh Day Adventist who insisted the Flood was responsible for the Earth's geological features.¹² Self-taught and lacking a formal education in geology, Price based flood geology on the teachings of his mentor, Ellen G. White (1827-1915), prophetess and founder of the Seventh Day Adventist movement. In numerous trance-like visions, White claimed she

⁷ Philip Henry Gosse, *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (London: John VanWoorst, 1857), vii, referenced in www.robibrad.demon.co.uk/chapter3_pf.htm.

⁸ Some young-earth creationists claim God created light from distant stars "in transit," thereby giving the universe only the "appearance of age." However, if God did that, then He had to create deceptive history and events that never occurred, an example being Supernova 1987A. Light from Supernova 1987A, which was 168,000 light-years from earth, reached earth in 1987. If the exploding star never actually existed and God only created the light in-transit, that suggests deception on the part of God which goes against Romans 1:20.

⁹ Grudem, 273, 290-291; Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 122-123; Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question* Second Edition (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 108; *Ryrie Study Bible (NASB)*, (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 11 (study note on Genesis 5:3); C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006), 204-206, 242. William Henry Green, "Primeval Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (April 1890), 285-303, accessed at www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/other_papers/primeval_chronology.shtml.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *An Expository Commentary: Genesis* (Volume 1), (Baker Books: 1982, 1988), 88-89.

¹¹ Profound differences exist between *mainstream science* vs. "creation science," "scientific creationism," "deluge science," or "flood geology." Scientists (both secular and Christian) widely regard "creation science" as pseudo-science.

¹² Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), xi.

was “carried back to the creation” and “Noah’s flood had sculpted the surface of the earth, burying the plants and animals found in the fossil record.”¹³ It is startling White’s “divine messages” became so influential in 21st century Christianity.

In the 1960s, “flood geology” was co-opted by John Whitcomb’s and Henry Morris’ book, *The Genesis Flood*, published in 1961. Like Price, neither Whitcomb nor Morris had degrees in geology. Although the book was extremely popular, many geologists were critical of the scholarship.¹⁴ The following statement by Christian geologist W.U. Ault is typical of the criticism the book received:

“The writings of these non-geologists [Price, Whitcomb, Morris] exhibit a basic lack of understanding of even the fundamental principles of geology... a number of basic points completely invalidate flood geology... The serious Bible student will not seek to support the physical aspects of Bible history with pseudoscience.”¹⁵

Despite the scientific shortcomings of *The Genesis Flood*, Whitcomb and Morris aggressively promoted the book, crisscrossing the country, speaking most often at Baptist churches, but also conservative Presbyterian, Lutheran, Reformed, and Pentecostal churches. They also spoke at Biola University, Bob Jones University, Dallas Theological Seminary and other seminaries and Bible colleges, spreading the “gospel of flood geology.”¹⁶ Today, many Christians accept the Whitcomb/Morris model ignoring, or unaware of, its scientific problems. That is the reason many pastors today still fallaciously preach “flood geology” is the reason “seashells are found on mountaintops.”¹⁷

Young-earth creationists often quote a 1984 letter from James Barr, Hebrew scholar from Oxford, to support their view. In the letter, Barr states he knows of “no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university” who does not believe that Genesis 1 conveys the “creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.”¹⁸ However, that statement is taken out of

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: Important Facts of Faith in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), cited in Numbers, 73-74; “George McCready Price and Flood Geology,” www.meta-library.net/history/floodgeo-body.html.

¹⁴ Numbers, 205.

¹⁵ W.A. Ault, “Flood (Genesis),” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volume 2, Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 561-563.

¹⁶ Numbers, 209-210.

¹⁷ Ancient seas once covered the earth. Due to geologic processes involving plate tectonics and mountain-building, the ancient sea beds were gradually thrust upward, resulting in seashells and fossilized sea life being found in all sedimentary layers, including mountain tops. The geologic column, comprised of distinctly separated layers of sandstone, shale, limestone, volcanic ash, etc, contains fossilized remains of dead animals AND evidence of living animals. Fossilized footprints of living animals are sandwiched in between layers containing dead animals. Clearly a cataclysmic flood of short duration cannot account for such formations.

¹⁸ Douglas Kelley, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1.1-2.4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1997), 50-51, cited in C. John Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 364-365.

context. In the letter, Barr clarifies “it’s really not so much a matter of technical linguistic competence, as an appreciation of the sort of text that Genesis is.” Yet, the reason young-earth creationists cite the letter is to demonstrate the 24-hour day view *is* a matter of technical linguistic competence.¹⁹

The old-earth (day-age) view has many advocates. A two-year study by the conservative PCA Creation Study Committee provides an excellent overview some of the supporters:

“In the 19th century, before Darwin’s 1859 *Origin of Species* and in the midst of much discussion of a geological basis for an ‘old earth,’ Robert Shaw described favorably the possibility of interpreting the days of creation as ages. Professor Taylor Lewis of the Reformed Church of America advocated long ages... as did Donald MacDonald, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland... Of the Old Princeton theologians, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield supported a Day-Age approach, as did also J. Gresham Machen, O.T. Allis, and E.J. Young of Westminster Seminary... J. Oliver Buswell, Jr.... R. Laird Harris and Francis Schaeffer. In his three-volume *Commentary on Genesis*, James Montgomery Boice... concludes by favoring a Day-Age view.”²⁰

Other Christian leaders who are/were open to the old-earth perspective include: John Ankerberg, Walter Kaiser, William Lane Craig, Norman Geisler, J.P. Moreland, Chuck Colson, Paul Copan, Greg Koukl, C.S. Lewis, Hugh Ross, and Lee Strobel.²¹ The following comments represent the views of many conservative Bible scholars and theologians:

“Anyone who is at all familiar with the Bible and the way the Bible uses words, knows that the use of the word ‘day’ is not limited to twenty-four hours. It is frequently used to denote a period of entirely undefined length.... There is no necessity whatsoever for interpreting the days of Genesis 1 as solar days of twenty-four hours length.”²² – R.A. Torrey (1856-1928), founder of Talbot Seminary and editor of *The Fundamentals*.

“It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time.”²³ – J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), considered the last of the great orthodox Princeton theologians.

¹⁹ Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?*, 364-366.

²⁰ “Report of the Creation Study Committee,” June 21, 2000, accessible on the internet at www.pcahistory.org/creation/report.html.

²¹ “Notable Christians Open to an Old-earth, Old-universe Perspective,” available on the internet at www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/notable_leaders/index/shtml.

²² R.A. Torrey, cited in Rodney Whitefield, *Reading Genesis One—Comparing Biblical Hebrew with English Translation* (San Jose, CA: R. Whitefield Publisher, 2nd printing, 2004), 136.

²³ J. Gresham Machen, quoted in “Westminster Theological Seminary and the Days of Creation,” cited in www.wts.edu/news/creation.html.

“But then there arises the question as the length of these days. That is a question which is difficult to answer. Indications are not lacking that they may have been longer than the days we now know, but the Scripture itself does not speak as clearly as one might like.”²⁴ – Edward J. Young (1907-1968), regarded as “the epitome of conservative exegetical orthodoxy.”

And,

“[Young earth] creationists insist that the days cover a literal 24 hours, but this is not necessarily the case. Sometimes the word ‘day’ is used with a broader meaning... it can mean a period of indefinite duration.”²⁵ “Any view that makes the earth 12 to 20 thousand years old flies in the face of too much varied and independent evidence to be tenable. In my judgment the earth and universe are indeed billions of years old.”²⁶ – James Montgomery Boice, chairman of the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy.

THE CREATION “DAYS”

Martin Luther once said, “If I were younger, I would want to learn this language [Hebrew], for without it one can never properly understand the Holy Scripture... For that reason they have said correctly: ‘The Jews drink out of the original spring, the Greeks drink out of the stream flowing out of the stream, the Latins, however, out of the puddle.’”²⁷ We can only wonder how Luther would characterize those of us who read the Scriptures in modern English.

The debate over the creation days is not about the inspiration of the Bible, or a “literal” vs. “figurative” view of Scripture. Both young-earth and old-earth creationists believe the Bible is inspired and defend their interpretations as being *literal*. The issue is the *interpretation* of the text of Genesis 1.²⁸ According to Bruce Waltke, the young-earth exegesis is hindered by an adherence to a “woodenly literal” reading of Genesis.²⁹ Gordon Wenham concurs, stating the problem is “six days has been seized on and interpreted *over-literally*, with the result that science and Scripture have been pitted against each other instead of being seen as complementary.”³⁰

Does the Bible demand that we interpret the creation days as 24-hour time periods? To answer this question, I will compare the young-earth and old-earth views of each of the creation “days,” followed by a brief review of the exegetical support for the old-earth view.

²⁴ Edward J. Young, quoted in “Westminster Theological Seminary and the Days of Creation.”

²⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis, Volume I—An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 84.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁷ Martin Luther quote from www.ancient-hebrew.org.

²⁸ *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 11.

²⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, “The Literary Genre of Genesis, Chapter 1,” *Crux*, volume 27, number 4 (1991), 2-10.

³⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Bible Commentary, Volume 1, Genesis 1-15* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 39.

Day One: Light

The opening narrative of Genesis 1 states:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. ... And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ... And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Gen. 1:1-5)

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists claim Genesis 1:1 (*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*) is a summary statement of the work God performed during the creation week. They believe God created the Earth, mature and fully-formed, on the first day.³¹ According to their view, Earth was alone, suspended in the heavens and the Sun, Moon and stars were created on the fourth day. Thus, the light God made came from a source other than the Sun.

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists claim Genesis 1:1 describes God's creation of the universe (*ex nihilo*) through the "big bang" event, by which God created all matter and energy and ultimately all heavenly bodies including the Earth, Sun, Moon and stars. According to this view, the narrative shifts forward in time and changes from a cosmic perspective to an earthly one in Genesis 1:2 (the Earth was void and dark). At that point, God caused sunlight to penetrate the darkness and illuminate the Earth.

Exegetical Support

1) The Heavens and the Earth

The verbs used in Genesis 1:1-2 (i.e., God "*created*" and earth "*was*") are in the *perfect* tense³² and distinct from the *wayyiqtol* verb form used in the remainder of Genesis 1. As Hebrew linguist C. John Collins³³ notes, the *wayyiqtol* verb functions as "the backbone or

³¹ Some young-earth creationists have adopted Russell Humphreys' *Starlight and Time* model, a complex theory suggesting the heavens and earth were created at the same time using some sort of "white hole" cosmology. In this theory, 10 to 14 billion years of time elapsed as measured by a "clock" in the distant universe, while only 6,000 years of time elapsed as measured by clocks in the vicinity of earth. The discrepancy between the two clocks relates to the existence of an "event horizon" that propagates out of the center of the universe. There is no accepted scientific evidence for this model.

³² Biblical Hebrew verb "tenses" do not express the time *when* an event happens, but merely the state of action. Verbs in biblical Hebrew only indicate complete finished action (*perfect* "tense") or incomplete unfinished action (imperfect "tense"). A completed action may have been completed in the near past (and instant ago), the distant past (eons ago), or even the future. English translations of Hebrew verbs add "when" information that is not included in the original Hebrew meaning. For more information, read Whitefield, *Reading Genesis One: Comparing Biblical Hebrew with English Translation*.

³³ C. John Collins is Professor of Old Testament, and department chair at Covenant Theological Seminary. He served as chairman of the Old Testament Committee for the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible and holds a PhD in Hebrew linguistics.

storyline tense of Biblical Hebrew narrative discourse,”³⁴ while the *perfect* verb “denotes an event that took place before the main storyline got underway.”³⁵ Thus, the verb forms indicate the creation of “the heavens and the Earth” was separate from, and preceded, the events of the first creation day.

The Hebrew phrase “the heavens and the earth” (*hashamayim we ha ‘erets*) is known as a merism, where words coupled together have a different meaning than the individual words. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines *hashamayim we ha ‘erets* as “all the raw materials needed to make sun, planets, stars, nebulae, galaxies, molecules, atoms.”³⁶ Similarly, Vine and Grudem each equate *hashamayim we ha ‘erets* with “the entire universe” and “entire creation.”³⁷ This further supports the old-earth view that the entire universe—including the Earth, Sun, Moon, and stars—were created prior to the first creation day.

2) Creation from Nothing (*ex nihilo*)

Many young-earth creationists disavow the “big bang” as being strictly naturalistic science. However, it is important to consider the following statement by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Summit II, 1982) on the relationship of science and Scripture:

“It is sometimes argued that our exegesis should not be influenced by scientific observations. We believe this view is mistaken. While the Bible clearly gives more specific information about our relationship to God than one can possibly deduce from natural revelation, it does not necessarily follow that our understanding of the physical world, its origin, etc., will also be more clearly deduced from God’s revelation in His word than His revelation in His world. Since both are revelations from God, and therefore, give a unified story, it seems quite permissible to consider all of the evidence (scientific as well as biblical) to be significant to the degree that each revelation can be clearly interpreted.”³⁸

The young-earth rejection of the big bang model parallels the Galileo controversy in the 1500s. Galileo observed the earth revolved around the sun, which conflicted with the Catholic Church’s interpretation of Psalm 93:1 (the earth being unmovable) and Ecclesiastes 1:4-5 (the sun appearing to revolve around the sun). Through scientific observation the meaning of Scripture was eventually brought into clearer focus. As respected Christian philosopher William Lane Craig states, “The Big Bang model ...dramatically and unexpectedly [supports] the biblical doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*.”³⁹

³⁴ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, 21.

³⁵ Collins, 51.

³⁶ Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, & Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980.

³⁷ W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 54-55. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 273, 290-291.

³⁸ *International Council on Biblical Inerrancy*, Summit II (1982), quoted in *The Genesis Debate*, 73.

³⁹ William Lane Craig, www.arn.org/docs/odesign/od172/cosmos172.htm.

3) Let There be Light

Young-earth creationists interpret Genesis 1:3 (“*And God said, ‘Let there be light,’*”) to mean God created light that instant. This is because English has a *punctiliar* aspect, which means the reader views the action as taking place at a single point in time.⁴⁰ However, the Hebrew verb for “be” (*hayah*) means “to be” or “to exist.” As Collins notes, the verbs in Genesis 1:3 (Let there *be...* and there *was*) do not imply the *creation* of light, or a sense of coming into existence.⁴¹ This supports the view that the illumination came from pre-existing light—the sun. There is no exegetical justification for the young-earth creationists’ hypothesis that the light came from a non-solar source God created.

Old-earth creationists use Job 38 to explain the events of the first creation day. Job tells us, when God “*laid the foundation of the earth,*” He “*made clouds its garment and thick clouds its swaddling band*” (Job 38:4, 9 ESV).⁴² Based on this, old-earth creationists maintain the Earth was initially dark because it was surrounded by a dense, opaque atmosphere. Then, in Genesis 1:3, God caused the thick cloud cover to thin, allowing sunlight to reach the Earth’s surface for the first time.

4) Day (*yôm*) with a Number

Hebrew scholars acknowledge the word translated “day” (*yôm*) has several *literal* meanings: daylight, day, time, moment, or long era of time. The question is which definition of *yôm* did the Genesis author intend? Biblical Hebrew has a very limited vocabulary—approximately 3,100 words compared to over 4,000,000 English words.⁴³ In English, we have many words to describe a long period of time. However, biblical Hebrew has no word other than *yôm* to denote a long time-span.⁴⁴

Some claim *yôm* attached to a number (i.e., ordinal, “first, second, third,” etc.) requires a 24-hour-day interpretation. However, Bible scholars dispute that. For example, noted Hebrew scholar Gleason L. Archer states the ordinal simply defines a symbolic unit of time and “serves as no real evidence for a literal 24 hour day concept on the part of the Biblical author.” Archer also points out that the days of creation do *not* bear a definite article in Hebrew (i.e., “*the* first day,” “*the* second day,” etc.). He states, “In Hebrew prose of this genre, the definite article was generally used where the noun was intended to

⁴⁰ W.D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 4,19, cited in Whitefield, *Reading Genesis One: Comparing Biblical Hebrew with English Translation*, 55.

⁴¹ Collins, 57.

⁴² Scientists agree with Job’s description. In *Life As We Do Not Know It* (Viking: 2005, pp 27-30), author Peter Ward describes the early earth as follows: “. . . thick, roiling atmosphere of steam and carbon dioxide filled the skies . . . planet-smothering cloud of water vapor . . . the sun would appear much dimmer . . . it had to shine through a poisonous, riled atmosphere composed of billowing carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, steam, and methane.”

⁴³ *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 125.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 148. Note: The Hebrew word *’olam* is sometimes claimed to mean a long time period. However, Hebrew lexicons show that only in *post-biblical* writings did *’olam* refer to a long age or epoch. In biblical times it meant “forever,” “perpetual,” “lasting,” “always,” or “the remote past.”

be definite... Thus they [the days of creation] are well adapted to a *sequential pattern*, rather than to strictly delimited units of time.”⁴⁵

It should also be noted that there are instances in Scripture where *yôm* used with a number does not restrict its meaning to 24 hours. For example, Hosea 6:2 states: “*He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day,*” referring to Israel’s ultimate restoration some hundreds or thousands of years in the future. Zechariah 14:7, describing the Day of the Lord, contains *yôm echad* (translated “unique day”), which is identical to *yôm echad* of Genesis 1:5 (translated “one day”). The context of Zechariah 14:7-8 suggests *yôm echad* will be a period of time spanning at least one summer and one winter, obviously longer than a 24-hour calendar day.

5) Evening and Morning

Young-earth creationists claim “day” (*yôm*) accompanied by the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning” indicates the creation days were normal 24-hour days. However, there is lack of unanimity on this point. For example, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* states “These are not ordinary days bounded by minutes and hours, but days of God... The beginning of each act of creation is called morning, and the close of that specific divine act is called evening.”⁴⁶

In biblical Hebrew, “evening” (*‘ereb*) has several meanings, including “sunset,” “night,” or “at the turn of evening”⁴⁷ and conveys a “sense of gradual cessation or diminishing of activity.”⁴⁸ “Morning” (*bōqer*) also has several meanings, including “the point of time at which night is changing to day... the end of night, daybreak, dawn”⁴⁹ or “beginning of day”⁵⁰ and conveys a sense of a “new starting of creative activity.”⁵¹ Thus, neither term restricts the meaning of “day” to a 24-hour period.

Much of the confusion comes from the King James Version, which combines evening and morning together—“*And the evening and the morning were the nth day.*” As Collins notes, “Grammatically, the AV [Authorized King James Version] compresses the two events into a *sum*, namely, the evening plus the morning were a day.”⁵² This is incorrect. A more accurate translation is found in the NASB and ESV: “*And there was evening and there was morning, the nth day.*” Note the time period from “evening” to “morning”

⁴⁵ Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, (1982), 60-61.

⁴⁶ *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, Editors (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), 3.

⁴⁷ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1906; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 398-401; William Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (1847; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 341-342; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:370-371, cited in Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, 73.

⁴⁸ Whitefield, *Reading Genesis One: Comparing Biblical Hebrew with English Translation*, 68.

⁴⁹ *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 152-153.

⁵⁰ Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, 73.

⁵¹ Whitefield, 68.

⁵² Collins, 56.

brackets only the night. As Collins states: “This means that any effort to find this as defining [24-hour] *days* runs counter to the author’s [Moses] own presentation.”⁵³

That “evening and morning” can be used to represent long periods of time is evident in Psalm 90, which is attributed to Moses, the writer of Genesis. In the Psalm, “morning” defines the beginning of life and “evening” the end of life. Thus, “morning and evening” brackets the entire human lifespan. As Hebrew scholar Gleason Archer states, “Concerning the recurring [evening and morning] formula at the end of each creative day... there were definite and distinct stages in God’s creational procedure... it serves as no real evidence for a literal twenty-four-hour day concept on the part of the biblical author.”⁵⁴

According to Professor Nathan Aviezer of Bar-Ilan University in Israel, this is consistent with the way early Talmud scholars approached Genesis 1. He states, “A statement must be made at the outset about biblical chronology of the six days of creation. Any attempt to correlate the biblical text with scientific knowledge must necessarily understand the term ‘day’ to mean a phase or a period in the development of the world, rather than a time interval of twenty-four hours...”⁵⁵

Day Two: Sky and Waters

The narrative of the second day states:

And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters... And it was so. (Gen. 1:6-8)

Young-Earth View

Young-Earth creationists contend this passage states that God created the atmosphere and separated the heavenly waters from terrestrial waters during a normal 24-hour day.

Old-Earth View

The old-earth view is similar, except the events take place over an extended period of time, during which God established a stable atmosphere and water cycle.

Exegetical Support

The English translation, “And God said... And it was so,” imparts a sense of immediacy. However, the Hebrew phrase translated “and it came to pass” or “and it was so” is a *waw-consecutive* form of the *imperfect* verb “to be,” which merely signifies a completed action. As Whitefield points out, this indicates the commands have been completed and does not imply the action was completed immediately.⁵⁶ Thus, although God commanded

⁵³ Collins, 77.

⁵⁴ Archer, 62.

⁵⁵ Nathan Aviezer, *In the Beginning: Biblical Creation and Science*, (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1990), 1-2.

⁵⁶ Whitefield, *Reading Genesis One: Comparing Biblical Hebrew with English Translation*, 72, 95.

the establishment of an atmosphere and water cycle, there is no textual requirement it occurred within a 24-hour period.

Day Three: Plants

The narrative of the third creation day states:

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth."... And the earth brought forth vegetation... plants... and trees. (Gen. 1:9-13)

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists contend God caused dry land to appear and then created mature forms of all the plant life on the Earth—all within in a 24-hour period. John MacArthur expresses this viewpoint succinctly: "There is no doubt beautiful waterfalls and canyons and other features... were all made in one day... Vegetation of every kind appeared instantly at His word... He created fully mature vegetation with seed already in it, ready to be dispersed... God created plants, not merely seeds."⁵⁷ According to their view, the light necessary for plant life came from a non-solar source, because the sun wasn't created until "day" four.

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists contend God caused dry land to emerge from the water-covered earth over eons of time through plate-tectonics and other geological processes. Then, once the conditions were right, God caused plants to sprout, grow, and develop "after their kinds."⁵⁸ According to their view, different generations of plants appeared over time according to God's timetable—each perfectly matched to the environment and the increasing sunlight as the atmosphere continued to gradually clear.

Exegetical Support

The text does not say God supernaturally created (*bara*) mature plants. The command is in the *Hiphil* verb form, indicating the *land* was to be the agent causing the sprouting. The Hebrew "brought forth" (*yatsa'*) is a completed action (i.e., *imperfect* verb with a "waw" prefix). This indicates the plants germinated from seeds and grew into mature plants, a process requiring months or years. Some young-earth creationists claim God caused plants to grow supernaturally fast, so that they sprouted and bore fruit in 24 hours.

⁵⁷ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning: Creation, Evolution, and the Bible* (W. Publishing Group, 2001), 56, 98.

⁵⁸ The information encoded within DNA, even in the most primitive plant life, is one of the strongest evidences for God. In either creationist view, the growth, metabolism, and reproduction of plants require information encoded within DNA. The genetic code, like any language or code, requires a pre-existing "programmer" or Intelligence. Science has no explanation for the complex specified information encoded within the DNA of living organisms.

However, that would require that we interpret the words differently than their usual Hebrew meanings and there is no textual evidence to support that assertion.⁵⁹

Genesis 2:8-9 also speaks of plant growth. It states: “*And the LORD God planted a garden... And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow [tsamach] every tree...*” *Tsamach* means to “sprout or grow,” natural processes that require more than 24 hours to produce a mature tree. Although God caused plants to appear on the Earth and governed the growth processes (i.e., germination, sprouting, seed-production and fruit-bearing), compressing the events of the third day into a 24-hour time period distorts the Hebrew word meanings of both Genesis 1:11-12 and Genesis 2:8-9.

Day Four: Sun, Moon, and Stars

The narrative of the fourth creation day states:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,” and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. (Gen. 1:14-19)

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists claim God created the Sun, Moon, and stars in an instant.

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists contend the Sun, Moon, and stars were created “in the beginning” as part of the “heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). On the fourth day, God caused the atmosphere to clear so these heavenly bodies became visible for the first time from the surface of the Earth to mark signs, seasons, days and years.

Exegetical Support

While English translations can make it sound as though God created the Sun, Moon and stars that instant, the Hebrew text indicates otherwise. First, the text states God “made” (*‘āsāh*) the lights, not that He “created” (*bārā*) them. *Asah* expresses the idea of producing something from pre-existing material, not the idea of bringing something into existence that did not exist before (*bārā*).⁶⁰ Also, the verb *asah* does not specify *when* God created the heavenly bodies, only that he completed the action. Second, the Hebrew “Let there be...” does not imply the creation of the heavenly bodies in the sense of their coming into existence.⁶¹ “Let there be” is completed with the purpose clause “to separate.” Thus, the narrative focuses on the *function* of the lights rather than their *origin*.⁶² Third, the Hebrew “and it was so” denotes a completed action—that the sun and

⁵⁹ Whitefield, 97.

⁶⁰ *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, 52.

⁶¹ Collins, 57.

⁶² *Ibid.*

moon had performed the functions God commanded, serving as signs for years, seasons and days. This could not be accomplished in a 24-hour period. All of these things argue against an instantaneous creation of the Sun, Moon and stars.

It is also important to remember that the Hebrew phrase “the heavens and the earth” (*hashamayim we ha ‘erets*) in Genesis 1:1 encompasses everything in the physical universe. As previously discussed, this interpretation is supported by the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*,⁶³ Vine⁶⁴ and Grudem.⁶⁵ Bruce Waltke also confirms that *hashamayim we ha ‘erets* refers to the totality of the physical universe, all matter and energy and whatever else it contains.⁶⁶ Thus, the Hebrew text clearly states the Sun, Moon and stars were created “in the beginning” and not on the fourth day.

For these reasons, many Bible scholars believe Genesis 1:16 is more accurately interpreted as meaning God *had made* the heavenly bodies *prior* to the fourth day. Gleason Archer states: “The Hebrew verb *wayya`as*’ in verse 16 should better be rendered ‘Now [God] *had made* the two great luminaries...’⁶⁷ Wayne Grudem states: “[had made] can be taken as *perfects* indicating what God had done before... This view would imply that God *had made* the sun, moon, and stars earlier... or allowed them to be seen from the earth on Day 4.”⁶⁸ Harris, Archer, and Waltke state: “Verse 16 should *not* be understood as indicating the creation of the heavenly bodies for the first time on the fourth creative day; rather it informs us that the sun, moon, and stars *were created* on Day 1.”⁶⁹ And, James Montgomery Boice states: “It is not said that these [sun, moon, and stars] were created on the fourth day; they were created in the initial creative work of God referred to in Genesis 1:1.”⁷⁰

Day Five: Sea and Flying Creatures

The narrative of the fifth day states:

And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth”... so God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves with which the waters swarm... according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. (Gen. 1:20-23)

⁶³ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980.

⁶⁴ Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary., 54-55.

⁶⁵ Grudem, 273, 290-291.

⁶⁶ Bruce Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, cited in Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question, Second Expanded Edition* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 18.

⁶⁷ Archer, 61.

⁶⁸ Grudem, 300.

⁶⁹ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

⁷⁰ Boice, *Genesis, Volume I – An Expository Commentary*, 75.

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists believe God created all the creatures of the sea and birds on the fifth day. They claim everything, both living and extinct, was spoken into existence instantaneously.⁷¹

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists contend God created sea creatures and flying creatures on the fifth day. These creatures were created progressively over long ages of time—not like a bolt of lightning.⁷² As creatures died and went extinct, God created new creatures to replace them.

Exegetical Support

The first task of biblical exegesis is to discover the original, intended meaning of the words of the Bible.⁷³ The Hebrew term “living creature” (*nephesh khayyâ*) means “living animated being”⁷⁴ or “air-breathing creature.”⁷⁵ According to MacArthur, *nephesh* literally means that which breathes and speaks of soulful life (i.e., mind, will and emotion) as opposed to merely organic life.⁷⁶ These sea creatures and *nephesh khayyâ* may be air-breathing mammals such as dolphins, porpoises, and the like.⁷⁷ “Great sea creatures” (*tannîn*) is translated “great whales” in some English Bibles but has a broader meaning, referring to enormous creatures.⁷⁸ These are most likely creatures the Israelites were familiar with—possibly whales or sharks⁷⁹ or large crocodiles, which were common in Moses’ day.⁸⁰ The text does not indicate when fish (*dagâ*) were created,⁸¹ nor does it discuss other types of marine organisms.

As to the flying creatures God created, all we can say with certainty is some flying creatures were created on the fifth day. This may refer to birds or other creatures. The word traditionally translated “birds” (*’ôp*) means “flying thing” or “a thing that flies.” Thus, it can denote creatures other than birds, such as flying insects or bats.⁸²

While young-earth creationists claim the text indicates these creations were instantaneous, the Hebrew text does not support that view. There is a change from a singular to plural meaning in Genesis 1:20 and 1:21 that is obscured in most English

⁷¹ MacArthur, 125.

⁷² Whitefield, 113.

⁷³ Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 23.

⁷⁴ Collins, 47.

⁷⁵ Whitefield, 111, 113.

⁷⁶ MacArthur, 124.

⁷⁷ Whitefield, 113.

⁷⁸ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2528b.

⁷⁹ Collins, 48.

⁸⁰ Whitefield, 115.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 111, 113.

⁸² Collins, 47; Whitefield, 120.

translations.⁸³ The singular words in verse 20 are “nephesh the living” and “flyer.” The plural words in verse 21 come about by the action of a Hebrew word translated “all” plus the plural word translated “by kinds.” Thus, as Whitefield explains:

“Genesis 1:20 refers to a singular kind of ‘air breathing creature’ and a singular kind of ‘flyer.’ The swarm is singular in kind, but a swarm composed of many individual creatures of that kind. . . The two verses in sequence indicate the following: Initially, a single type (kind) of ‘swarming’ creature and a single type (kind) of ‘flyer’ were commanded to exist. Then the numbers of the individual types of ‘swarming’ creatures and ‘flying’ creatures increased, resulting in the use of the plural word ‘by kinds.’”⁸⁴

It should be noted that these verses attribute the increase in the number of the individual “kinds” to the creative (*bara*) action of God. God acted in producing new additional kinds.⁸⁵ This supports the view that the sea and flying creatures in the narrative were created over long periods of time. It is also in harmony with the creation Psalm, Psalm 104, which alludes to the creation and extinction of life, followed by further creation:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; When you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created [bara] and you renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:29-30, ESV)

Day Six: Land Animals and Man

The narrative of the sixth day states:

And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so... Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image... (Gen. 1:24-31)

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists contend God created all land animals and the first humans, Adam and Eve, in a 24-hour period. MacArthur states this position clearly: “Bear in mind that the creation of Adam occurred on the same day all other land animals were created. All of this occurred in one twenty-four hour period—one revolution of the earth.”⁸⁶ In their view, Neanderthals and other ancient hominids were human beings that *descended* from Adam and Eve.

⁸³ Whitefield, 113. Precise meanings may be obscured due to the chain of translation from the original biblical Hebrew, to Greek Septuagint, to Latin Vulgate, to English Wycliffe, to English Tyndale, to King James Version, and finally to modern English translations (NIV, NASB, ESV, etc).

⁸⁴ Whitefield, 114.

⁸⁵ Whitefield, 113-114.

⁸⁶ MacArthur, 158.

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists contend God created land animals on the sixth day. These were created progressively, over long ages of time, beginning several hundred million years ago. God created the first humans, Adam and Eve, much later, around 50 thousand years ago.⁸⁷ In their view, the hominids, such as *Homo erectus* and the Neanderthals, are not human beings and preceded God's fiat creation of Adam and Eve.

Exegetical Support

The narrative speaks of three types of land animals: livestock, creatures that move along the ground and wild animals. The Hebrew word for livestock (*behema*) refers to large four-footed mammals that are easy to domesticate.⁸⁸ The Hebrew word for creatures that move along the ground (*remes*) refers to the locomotion of small creatures—small rodents and possibly small reptiles.⁸⁹ The Hebrew word for wild animals (*chay*) means wild or alive and comes from the root *haya* that conveys living life to the fullest.⁹⁰ Because this requires the attributes of mind, will and emotion; *chay* seems to refer to wild mammals. As a result, it is evident the text does not describe the creation of all land creatures—only certain mammals and perhaps some small reptiles. Thus, we can only speculate as to when large reptiles, dinosaurs, amphibians, insects and a host of other land creatures were created.

Some readers of Genesis 1:24 take the phrases, “*And God said... And it was so,*” to mean immediate action on God's part. However, these statements simply mean God's commanded action was *completed* at some point in the past. It conveys no information about how long ago the action took place or how long it took to complete.⁹¹ Thus, there is no textual requirement that these activities were completed within the confines of a 24-hour day. A number of Bible scholars also note the extreme improbability that the events of the sixth “day” could have been accomplished in 24 hours. Gleason Archer comments:

“There it is stated that on the sixth day (apparently toward the end of the day, after all the animals had been fashioned and placed on the earth—therefore not long before sundown at the end of the same day), ‘God created man in His own image; He created them male *and female.*’ This can only mean that Eve was created in the closing hour of Day Six, along with Adam. As we turn to Genesis 2, however, we find that a considerable interval of time must have intervened between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve... the LORD God put Adam in the Garden of Eden... to cultivate and keep [the garden]... God then gave Adam a major assignment... he was to classify every species of animals and bird ... the

⁸⁷ Scientific evidence indicates relatively recent appearance of humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) on Earth, estimated to be in the range of 10,000 to 100,000 years ago. For further study, see Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam?* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 45.

⁸⁸ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 208a.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2177a.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 644a.

⁹¹ For those not familiar with Biblical Hebrew, verbs have no tense and do not tell you “when” an action takes place, only that an action is either *complete* or *incomplete*. For additional information, see Whitefield, pages 54-55.

garden must have had hundreds of species of mammal, reptile, insect, and bird... It must have required some years, or, at the very least, a considerable number of months to complete this comprehensive inventory of all the birds, beasts and insects that populated the Garden of Eden... [It is] very apparent that Genesis 1 was never intended to teach that the sixth creative day, when Adam and Eve were *both* created, lasted a mere twenty-four hours... it would seem to border on sheer irrationality to insist that all of Adam's experiences in Genesis 2:15-22 could have been crowded into the last hour or two of a literal twenty-four hour day."⁹²

Similarly, Wayne Grudem notes:

“An additional argument for a long period of time in these ‘days’ is the fact that the sixth day includes so many events that it must have been longer than twenty-four hours... [It] includes the creation of animals... God’s creation of Adam, God’s putting Adam in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it, and giving Adam directions regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, his bringing all the animals to man for them to be named, finding no helper fit for Adam ... creating Eve... The finite nature of man and the incredibly large number of animals created by God would by itself seem to require that a much longer period of time than part of one day would be needed to include so many events...”⁹³

C. John Collins, Norman Geisler and Hugh Ross express similar doubts that the events of the sixth “day” could be accomplished within the confines of a 24-hour day.⁹⁴ Ross points out that it is useful to note Adam’s exclamation upon seeing Eve for the first time. His remark in Genesis 2:23 is *happa’am*, usually translated “now at length.” This is equivalent to our expression “at last!” Clearly, this would be an odd statement for Adam to make if he had only waited a few hours for God to create his helpmate, Eve.

Young-earth creationists dispute the fact that hominids existed on the Earth before Adam and Eve were created. However, it is clear that a great number of hominids preceded the appearance of modern man on the Earth, including *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, and the Neanderthals.⁹⁵ These were creatures God created that walked upright, had limited intelligence and later went extinct. The pinnacle of God’s creation, human beings, came later, marked by the appearance of Cro-Magnon Man (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) about 50 thousand years ago. Unlike the hominids, Cro-Magnon Man is identical to modern man anatomically and exhibits all of the same behaviors, including a spiritual dimension.

The young-earth claim that hominids were *human* and *descended* from Adam has no scientific support. For example, recent DNA studies cast a dark shadow on any connection between Neanderthal and modern man. Researchers at the University of

⁹² Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 59-60.

⁹³ Grudem, 294.

⁹⁴ Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?*, 89. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, The Norman L. Geisler Apologetics Library on CD-ROM, 2002 (“The Days of Genesis,” p.270). Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 79-81.

⁹⁵ Rana and Ross, *Who Was Adam?*, 143.

Stockholm, University of Glasgow, and the Max Planck Institute studied Neanderthal DNA and concluded, “The cumulative weight of evidence appears to decisively sever the link between Neanderthals and humans.”⁹⁶

It should be noted that the genetic fingerprint of modern man, found in the mitochondrial DNA of females and the Y-chromosomal DNA of males, traces back to a single male and a single female.⁹⁷ This lends amazing credibility to the Genesis account of humanity arising from one man and one woman. It also negates the claim of evolutionary connections between modern man and Neanderthals and other ancient hominids.

Day Seven: God Rested

The narrative of the seventh day states:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ... rested ... from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy... (Gen. 2:1-3)

Young-Earth View

Young-earth creationists believe the seventh day of God’s rest was a 24-hour period. Based on the statement in Exodus 20:11 (ESV), “*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day,*” they maintain the creation “week” was a period of seven 24-hour days.

Old-Earth View

Old-earth creationists contend the seventh day is an ongoing period. Although God continues His providential work of preserving and governing His creation, He is at rest in the sense that He is no longer creating. Because the seventh day is a period of indeterminate length, they argue this is evidence the other creation days are not 24-hour periods.

Exegetical Support

The seventh day lacks the concluding “evening/morning” refrain found in the narratives of the other creation days. This indicates God’s Sabbath rest is ongoing. Since God’s Sabbath rest is unending, the seventh day must be unending.⁹⁸ The New Testament confirms the seventh day of God’s rest is an ongoing reality.⁹⁹ For example in Hebrews, God invites us, present tense, to join Him in His Sabbath rest:

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he said, ‘As I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest,’ although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this

⁹⁶ Ibid., 186, 189.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 137.

⁹⁸ *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 86-87, 145-146.

⁹⁹ *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 87, 146.

way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.’ And again in this passage he said, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’ (Hebrews 4:3-5, ESV).

The English translation of Exodus 20:11, “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and earth...” makes it sound as though God created everything within the confines of six calendar-days. However, the preposition “in” does not appear in the original Hebrew.¹⁰⁰ Rather, the verse is more correctly translated, “For six *yôms* the LORD made...” The addition of “in” originated with the King James Version translation and “played a significant role in the advocacy of the creation days being completed within 144 hours (6x24).”¹⁰¹ When the verse is correctly translated, it is clear the creation “days” could have been long time periods.

The reference to the Sabbath in Exodus 20 seems to refer to the *pattern* of “days,” not their duration.¹⁰² The emphasis is on the *pattern* of work and rest, a ratio of six to one, not on the length of the creation days. Exodus 20:9 addresses the work-week of humans (seven 24-hour days); Exodus 20:11 addresses the work-week of God (seven time periods). Thus, as Hebrew scholar Gleason Archer notes: “By no means does this [Exodus 20:9-11] demonstrate that 24-hour intervals were involved in the first six ‘days,’ any more than the eight-day celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles proves that the wilderness wanderings under Moses occupied only eight days.”¹⁰³ In Leviticus 25:4 the *pattern* of one out of seven is duplicated with six years of planting the land and one year of “Sabbath rest for the land.”¹⁰⁴ This further demonstrates the analogy of our Sabbath to God’s Sabbath does not demand that the creation “week” consisted of seven 24-hour days.¹⁰⁵

DEATH BEFORE THE FALL

For centuries, the traditional young-earth view included a belief in 24-hour creation days, the creation of Adam & Eve six-to-ten thousand years ago, and that Noah’s flood was global. It was only in the mid-20th century that *modern* young-earth creationism added “no death before the Fall” as a matter of doctrinal orthodoxy.¹⁰⁶ Although the death-before-the-fall issue does not directly pertain to the creation days, it is an important aspect of the young-earth/old-earth debate.

In the young-earth view, God’s declaration in Genesis 1:31 that everything He had made was “very good” eliminates the possibility of pain, suffering and carnivorous activity prior to the Fall. Young-earth creationists Ken Ham and Terry Mortenson state the idea of animal death before the Fall “goes directly against the teaching of the Bible and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 75-76; Whitefield, 76-78.

¹⁰¹ Whitefield, 76-78.

¹⁰² Ross, 92.

¹⁰³ Gleason L. Archer, “A Response to the Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science,” in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986), 329, cited in Ross, *A Matter of Days*, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 75-76.

¹⁰⁵ *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 150.

¹⁰⁶ John Millam, PhD, “Historic Age Debate: Overview, Part 2/2,” www.reasons.org/tmr/b/2007/10/17/.

dishonors the character of God.”¹⁰⁷ Similarly Henry Morris writes, “The Bible is quite explicit in teaching that there was no suffering or death of sentient life in the world before man brought sin into the world.”¹⁰⁸

The old-earth view is that Adam’s sin resulted in the *spiritual* death of mankind followed (eventually) by physical death. Thus, animal death occurred long before the creation of mankind and was not a result of the Fall. To examine this issue, it is important to first consider God’s warning to Adam in Genesis 2:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’ (Genesis 2:16-17, NASB)

In this passage, God tells Adam, “*you shall surely die.*” Animal death is neither stated nor implied. Both young-earth and old-earth advocates also agree the death God imposed was *spiritual* death. Young-earth creationist John MacArthur writes, “*Spiritually*, our first parents did die in the very same day they partook of the forbidden fruit. But physically, their lives were graciously prolonged.”¹⁰⁹ Old-earth creationist Gleason Archer writes, “The death that overtook the guilty pair that day was *spiritual only*; physical death did not come until centuries later... They were plunged immediately into a state of *spiritual* death.”¹¹⁰ It is curious then, why young-earth creationists insist the command included the death of animals.

Young-earth creationists often quote a portion of Romans 5:12 to support their claim that animal death was the result of the Fall: “*Through one man sin entered the world and death through sin...*” However, it is important to examine the complete verse which reads: “*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned*” (Romans 5:12, NASB). This clearly states death came to all “men.” “Men” comes from the Greek word *anthrōpos*, meaning “a human being, male or female, in distinction from animals.”¹¹¹ Why did death come to men? Because through Adam all men (*anthrōpos*) sinned, resulting in man’s spiritual and physical death. Animal death is neither stated nor implied.

Respected theologians agree with this view. For example, referring to Romans 5:12, James Montgomery Boice states: “But this [death] does not really pertain to the animal realm, in that animals do not have God-consciousness... [It] is conceivable that animals could be created to enjoy a normal lifespan and then to die without having any of the judgmental qualities death has for man.”¹¹² Similarly, young-earth creationist Louis

¹⁰⁷ Ken Ham and Dr. Terry Mortenson, “What’s wrong with progressive creation?”, www.answersingenesis.org/articles/wow/whats-wrong-with-progressive-creation

¹⁰⁸ Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1974), 229.

¹⁰⁹ John MacArthur, 217.

¹¹⁰ Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 72-73.

¹¹¹ *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, 388.

¹¹² Boice, 77.

Berkof states: “All of this does not mean, however, that there may not have been death in some sense of the word in the lower creation apart from sin...”¹¹³

Another verse often used by young-earth creationists to claim all death arose from Adam’s Fall is 1 Corinthians 15:21: “*For since by a man came death.*” Once again, it is important to examine the entire verse: “*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive.*” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22) This verse tells us human death came about by Adam and that humans (*anthropos*) will be made alive through Christ. The context pertains exclusively to human death and resurrection because it is clear that animals will not be “made alive” through Christ’s atoning death.

Young-earth creationists also use Romans 8:20-22 to suggest animal death and even a decaying universe were caused by Adam’s sin:¹¹⁴

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:20-22)

However, this interpretation clearly goes beyond the text, because Adam’s sin and the Fall are not directly referenced and animal death is not even mentioned. The context of Romans 8 is the ultimate glorification of mankind (verses 19, 21) and the hope that the creation, likewise, will be liberated from decay. The “frustration” or “futility” of the creation (Greek *mataiotēs*) is its “frailty, emptiness, and transitoriness,”¹¹⁵ which will some day be swallowed up when the present creation is replaced with a new creation—“*the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved*” (2 Peter 3:10).

Further, the Bible tells us the creation was subject to decay from the *beginning*. For example, in Psalms we are told: “*Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish... they will all wear out like a garment... they will pass away*” (Psalm 102:25-26). As James Montgomery Boice explains, “The cosmos is decaying or running down. This is called the second law of thermodynamics... One day the sun will use up its energy and be gone. The whole universe is like that. It is all running down, dissipating... It is not only the sun that is dying, of course, living creatures die, too.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, 669-670.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004), chapter 6. Also MacArthur, 198.

¹¹⁵ “Frustration” or “futility” definitions referenced in www.searchgodsword.org.

¹¹⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *An Expositional Commentary, Romans* (Baker Books, 1982, 1988), 873-874.

Finally, it is important to note that animal predation and death are extolled in Scripture as part of God's creation. The claim that God's "very good" creation had no animal death is contradicted by Job 38:39, wherein God glories in his ability to provide prey for the lion:

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?... The eagle mounts up and makes a nest on high... Spies out food; His eyes see from afar. His young ones also suck up blood; And where the slain are, there is he. (Job 38:39-41, 39:27-30)

Psalm 104:21 also expresses the same idea:

The beasts of the forest prowl about. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God... In wisdom you have created them all... (Psalm 104:20-24)

Regarding the issue of animal predation Augustine writes: "One might ask why brute beasts inflict injury on one another, for there is no sin in them for which this could be a punishment... The answer, of course, is that one animal is the nourishment of another. To wish that it were otherwise would not be reasonable."¹¹⁷ Seen in this light, animal predation and death are simply God's loving provision for the animal kingdom. Keep in mind that only Adam and Eve were granted eternal life through the "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). Since the animals did not have access to the "tree," they had no way to avoid death.

It should also be noted that *prior to* the creation of Eve and *before* the Fall, God brought the animals to Adam to name. The names Adam chose clearly suggest he was familiar with animal predation and death. For example, the Hebrew word for lion (*'arly*, Strong's number H738) means "in the sense of violence;" cormorant (*shalak*, H7994) means "bird of prey;" hawk (*nets*, H5322) means "unclean bird of prey;" eagle (*neshar*, H5404) means "to lacerate;" owl (*tachmac*, H8464) means "do violence to."¹¹⁸ These names indicate Adam had observed firsthand these flesh-eating predators inflicting suffering and death on each other in God's "very good" creation, *prior to* the Fall.

Some young-earth creationists suggest wild animals (Hebrew *chay*) were originally created vegetarian, based on their interpretation of Genesis 1:30. However, nothing in Scripture suggests a rapid post-Fall transformation of vegetarian creatures into carnivores. Vegetarian herbivores are designed with flat molars and jaws that move in a circular motion to grind food, ruminant stomachs, and digestive systems capable of digesting cellulose from plants. Carnivores have sharp teeth and claws, specialized digestive systems, and finely-programmed hunting instincts.¹¹⁹ Evolutionary theory cannot account for such rapid transformation and neither can Scripture, since these

¹¹⁷ Saint Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Volume 1 (1983), 92.

¹¹⁸ Strong's numbers referenced in www.BlueLetterBible.org

¹¹⁹ Mark S. Whorton, *Peril in Paradise: Theology, Science, and the Age of the Earth* (Waynesborow, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 124-125.

changes had to occur *after* Day Six and the Fall, which according to young-earth chronology is no more than ten thousand years ago.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to provide cogent arguments for old-earth creationism based on the Hebrew text of Genesis. Reasons often cited to support the young-earth view fade in the light of newer scholarship that has superseded Lightfoot and Ussher's mid-17th century calculations. In addition, Hebrew linguists acknowledge "day" (*yôm*), even when accompanied by ordinals and the "evening and morning" refrain, does not necessarily refer to a 24-hour day. *Yôm* can most definitely refer to a long "day-age" or epoch, and creation can *literally* be said to have occurred long ages ago.

The "creation science" and "flood geology" used to justify young-earth creationism is widely regarded as pseudoscience. This reflects negatively on Christianity and may contribute to the 70-to-80 percent attrition rate of young Christians after they enter college.¹²⁰ As Gleason Archer once asked, "Who can calculate the large numbers of college students who have turned away from the Bible altogether by the false impression that it bounds the conscience of the believer to the 24-hour Day theory?"¹²¹ This is clearly something that must be considered in judging the contrasting creationist views.

Well before Big Bang cosmology proved a creation billions of years old, Charles Hodge (1797-1878), a very conservative theologian, wrote the following:

"It is of course admitted that, taking the [Genesis creation] account by itself, it would be most natural to understand the word ["day"] in its ordinary sense; but if that sense brings the Mosaic account into conflict with facts, and another sense avoids such conflict, then it is obligatory on us to adopt that other [view]. . . The Church has been forced more than once to alter her interpretation of the Bible to accommodate the discoveries of science. But this has been done without doing any violence to the Scriptures or in any degree impairing their authority."¹²²

Science is respected and holds a prominent place in our culture. That doesn't mean that science is always correct. However, where mainstream science can be used to defend biblical creation, we should take advantage of that opportunity rather than relying on pseudoscience. For example, here are several statements by mainstream scientists that clearly support the biblical worldview:

¹²⁰ "Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years," *The Barna Update*, www.barna.org.

¹²¹ Gleason Archer, quoted from "Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible," *ICBI Summit II*, Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Prues, editors, (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1984), 333-334.

¹²² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), I:570-571, cited in C. John Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 81.

- The Big Bang creation: “There is no doubt that a parallel exists between the big bang as an event and the Christian notion of creation from nothing.” (George Smoot, Astronomer, U.C. Berkeley, Nobel Prize in Physics, 2006)¹²³
- Design of the Universe: “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which as an underlying (one might say, ‘supernatural’) plan.” (Arno Penzias, Nobel Prize, Physics)¹²⁴
- Origin of Life: “An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to almost be a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going. (Francis Crick, Co-discoverer of DNA)¹²⁵

And,

- “Precious little in the way of biochemical evolution could have happened on earth. If one counts the number of trial assemblies of amino acids that are needed to give rise to the enzymes, the probability of their discovery by random shufflings turns out to be less than 1 in $10^{40,000}$.” (Chandra Wickramasinghe, Professor & Chairman, Department of Applied Mathematics and Astronomy, University College, Wales)¹²⁶
- Problems with Evolution: “It remains true, as every paleontologist knows, that most new species, genera, and families and nearly all new categories above the level of families appear in the [fossil] record suddenly and are not led up to by known, gradual, completely continuous transitional sequences.” (Stephen J. Gould, Paleontologist, Harvard)¹²⁷

And,

- “Unfortunately, the origins of most higher categories [of life] are shrouded in mystery: Commonly new higher categories appear abruptly in the fossil record

¹²³ George Smoot and Key Davidson, *Wrinkles in Time* (NY: Avon, 1993), 36, cited in *Y-Origins: Back to the Beginning*, Bill Bright and Larry Chapman, Editors (Orlando, FL: Bright Media Foundation, 2006), 11.

¹²⁴ Arno Penzias cited in Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, Third Expanded Edition (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 159.

¹²⁵ Francis Crick, *Life Itself* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 88, cited in *Y-Origins*, 53.

¹²⁶ Chandra Wickramasinghe, “Where Microbes Went Boldly,” *New Scientist*, 91-412-415, August 13, 1991.

¹²⁷ Stephen J. Gould, quoted in www.ankerberg.com/articles/science/creation.htm

without evidence of transitional forms.” (Colin Patterson, Senior paleontologist, British Museum of Natural History, London)¹²⁸

Perhaps it is now time for Bible-believing evangelicals to heed the words of the late Gleason Archer, noted Hebrew linguist and co-author of the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* regarding the age of the earth debate:

“Moses never intended the creative days to be understood as a mere twenty-four hours in length, and the information he included in chapter 2 logically precludes us from doing so. It is only by a neglect of proper hermeneutical methods that this impression ever became prevalent among God’s people, during the post-biblical era. Entirely apart from any findings of modern science or challenges of contemporary scientism, the twenty-four hour theory was never correct and should never have been believed – except by those who are bent on proving the presence of genuine contradictions in Scripture.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Colin Patterson, *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Gleason Archer, quoted from “Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible,” *International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, Summit II* (1982), Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Prues, editors (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1984), 329.