

Creation's "Days"

Q - Do you think these are six literal 24-hour days (Genesis 1:5,8, etc.), or six longer periods of time in which God created? (II Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4). Views will differ, but there are many good reasons to take the record of creation's "days" at face value!

The Genesis record says God created in six days. Though most of the church "fathers" took the Genesis record at face value, there were some who were influenced by Greek thought to take the reference to six days in an allegorical sense. They are reported to have believed that the Lord actually created in **less than** six days!

In more recent times scientific speculation has proposed the possibility that the earth and the universe are much older than the Bible's chronologies seem to suggest. The speculations of scientists arise from (1) the supposition that the universe might be too large to allow light from distant sources to have traveled to the earth in the approximate six-thousand years of recorded Biblical history; and (2) the supposition that fossils discovered around the world reveal a much longer time frame for earth's history than the Bible seems to suggest; and (3) the supposition that the layers of rock and soil which make up the earth's crust took many ages to be formed and deposited as they are found in many places around the world.

A Biblical response to these scientific speculations includes the following ideas: (1) the supposition that light from distant sources wouldn't have time to reach the earth in only a few thousand years is addressed in part by the certainty that Adam and Eve were able to see the sun, the moon and the stars on the day of their creation because, like themselves (appearing to be adults on the day they were created), the universe began with

the “appearance of age”! (2) the supposition that fossils discovered around the world reveal long ages is addressed by the realization that the Biblical account of the Genesis flood is the best possible explanation for the existence of the fossil record (because fossils are the remnants of dead things laid down by water in rock layers all over the earth); and (3) the supposition that the layers of rock and soil which make up the earth’s crust were formed over long periods of time is addressed as well by the realization that the Biblical account of the Genesis flood provides the perfect explanation for the formation of earth’s layered condition - as the layers which were created in a day by the explosion of Mount Saint Helens in Washington State has substantiated!

So the Bible’s report that the earth and all of the life-forms which existed on it at creation were made by the word of the Lord in six literal 24-hour days not much longer than six thousand years ago is not only reasonable but is the only realistic understanding of the inspired account! The statement of II Peter 3:8 (based on Psalm 90:4) “that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” simply acknowledges God’s timelessness as the God of eternity. It is not spoken in connection with God’s creative acts, and has no relevance to the discussion of the six days of the creation account.

Let’s consider some facts which ARE relevant to the meaning of the six days of the Bible’s creation account:

1. The Hebrew word for “day” [*yom*] which occurs in the creation account normally refers to a 24-hour day. A typical concordance will illustrate that *yom* can have a range of meanings: a period of light as contrasted to the darkness of

night, a 24-hour period, time in general, a specific point of time, an indefinite period of time, and even a long age (e.g. the “Day of the Lord,” which includes the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ!). But *yom* most commonly refers to a 24-hour day. Because there is nothing in the creation account which would suggest otherwise, the days of Genesis 1 should be understood in the normal way - as 24-hour days.

2. The days of the creation account are said to include “evening and morning,” and are related to the recurring pattern of darkness and light (Genesis 1:3-5, NASB):

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.
 4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
 5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.”

Evening and morning and the recurring pattern of darkness and light which accompany evening and morning are relevant only in the case of a literal 24-hour day.

3. The days of the creation account are numbered. Outside of Genesis 1, it can be shown that *yom* is used with a number 359 times, and every time it refers to an ordinary 24-hour day. As a result, the numbered days of the creation account should be understood in the same way as numbered days are understood everywhere else in Scripture!

4. The days of the work-week are compared to the six days of the creation-week in Exodus 20:9,11(NASB):

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work . . . (11)
 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth,
 the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh
 day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made
 it holy."

Because we know that the days of the work-week are 24-hour days, it should be apparent that the "days" of the creation-week are also 24-hour days.

5. The "seventh day" (on which God "rested from all His work" - Genesis 2:3) is said to follow the six days of the creation week in Exodus 31:12-17. There God commanded the people of Israel to observe the weekly Sabbath after their six-day work-week because that is what the Lord Himself did.

6. Treating the days of creation as ages instead of 24-hour days makes impossible demands on the creation account.

For example:

Though God created light on Day 1 of the creation week, He didn't create the sun, moon and stars until Day 4. If Day 3 represents a long age instead of a 24-hour day, how did the plants God created on that "day" survive without the sun until it was created on Day 4?

We are told that Adam was created on the sixth day, then lived through the seventh day. Yet he lived a total of 930 years, so the "seventh day" could not have been a long age - suggesting that the first six days were not long ages either.

Why Is It Important?

If the days of creation are really geologic ages of millions of years, then the gospel message is undermined at its foundation because it puts death, disease, thorns, and suffering before the Fall. The effort to define “days” as “geologic ages” results from an erroneous approach to Scripture—reinterpreting the Word of God on the basis of the fallible theories of sinful people.

There are excellent reasons to believe that the Bible’s record of the six-day creation week and the seventh-day “rest” cycle should be taken at face value - referring to seven 24-hour days. It has always been the devil’s desire to raise questions about the credibility of God’s Word (as he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden). But we will always be best served when we trust God’s Word to say what it means and mean what it says - beginning with the first verse of the book of Genesis and continuing to the last word of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ!