



2013

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Recommended Citation

Hamp, Douglas (2013) "The Language of Creation: Confronting the God Plus Evolution Myth," *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Creationism*: Vol. 7 , Article 26.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/icc_proceedings/vol7/iss1/26



THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION: CONFRONTING THE GOD PLUS EVOLUTION MYTH

Douglas Hamp

ABSTRACT

The vocabulary and grammar of the biblical creation describe a period of seven-literal 24-hour days – unanimously affirmed by ancient Jewish and Ante-Nicene Christian commentators. Nevertheless, a God-plus-evolution myth has arisen offering an alternative interpretation of the biblical creation. The ideas range from each day being a long indefinite era of time to the Genesis account merely being a literary framework with no bearing to reality. This study seeks to prove that the seven days of creation were literal-24 days by considering: The delimiting use of a number in front of the Hebrew word “yom” (day); the literal use of numbers in the Bible, the language and the grammar of Genesis one and two, and the value of literary genre.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the literal-six day creation is underscored ironically by atheist and evolutionist R. Bozarth in the American Atheist Magazine: “The Meaning of Evolution:”

...evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing. (R. Bozarth 1979: 30)

While the atheists are forthright in their attack on the creation, the proponents of Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism, who profess a belief in God as creator and evolution as his mode of creation, are forced to somehow reconcile Scripture with evolution.

THE MEANING OF “DAY”

The keystone of whether the earth is relatively young or extremely old rests heavily on the understanding of the Hebrew word יום *yom*, (day). Progressive Creation theorists contend that the days in Gen 1:1-2:3 are to be understood as long, indefinite periods of time. The young earth view, however, claims that God created the heavens and the earth and all therein in six, literal 24-hour days roughly 6000 years ago. Does *day* only and always refer to a period of 24-hours or does it also refer to an indefinite period of time in which millions and billions of years could have passed allowing for the Progressive Creation and theistic-evolution theories?

The word *day* is used in several different ways in the Bible; sometimes referring to a time in the past. Judges 18:1, for example, states “In those days...” בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם *bayamim ha hem*. This exact phrase appears 31 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a very common expression and is really no different than how we in English say “back in my day” or “back in those days” referring to a period of years in our lives but stating it in *days*. Hence, in this context, days are understood to be referring to time in the past that probably lasted several years (there are many days in a year) though definitely not thousands or millions – something that is obvious because it talks about human history of which the Bible gives definite times.

Sometimes the biblical writers used the word *day* to refer to a specific time of eschatological significance such as “the day of the LORD” יוֹם הוֹה *yom YHWH*, found 13 times in the Hebrew Scriptures (mostly in the book of Isaiah), refers to a time in the future when God will judge the world and usher in a new age. This expression seems to speak more of an event of unknown duration rather than a specific amount of time, though a period of 24 hours cannot be ruled out.

At other times, *days* in the plural can refer to the span of someone's life. In Gen 5:4 we read concerning the days of Adam, “So all the days that Adam (יַמֵּי־אָדָם *yamei-adam*) lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” Here *day* is used in reference to Adam's lifetime, which is described as *days*, but then the text very clearly goes on to clarify what is meant by *days* – that is the years of his life or the summation of the days of his life. This is wonderfully illustrated by the Hebrew title of the book of I and II Chronicles דְּבַרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *divre ha-yamim lemalche Israel*, literally transliterated as *affairs or matters of the days of the kings of Israel*.

An objection raised by Progressive Creation advocate Hugh Ross states that the “day” in Gen 2:4 “refers to all six-creation days (and the creation events prior to the first creative day)... it refers to a period longer than 24 hours” (Ross 1991: 52) and therefore would support the theory that the days of the Genesis creation account long vast ages. He suggests the word for *generation* (*toledah*) underscores a long period of time. “In Gen 2:4 the plural form, *generations*, is used, indicating that multiple generations have passed.” (Ross 1991: 52)

Nevertheless, the Hebrew expression *in the day (that the LORD God) made* בְּיוֹם עָשָׂה (b'yom asot) actually carries the force of *when*. The letter ב (*beth*) in Hebrew often designates a temporal aspect. Joüon & Muraoka note in *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* “With the infinitive ב is used in the temporal sense”. This explains why the letter *beth* in בְּהִבְרָאָם (*b'hibaram*) is translated **when** they were created, a fact also supported by both the *Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon*, and *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Kautzsch, E. and A. E., Cowley, eds 1910). *B'yom* is part of a three-word construct chain and it is used in relation to the infinitive *asot* (*making*) which again carries the force of *when*. What is important not to overlook here, however, is that when *yom* is used in conjunction with the preposition *beth* it may be understood as a less precise expression than the 24-hour day. When *yom* is used with a number, it always refers to a literal, 24-hour day. Furthermore, the full range of meaning of the word תּוֹלְדוֹת (*toledoth*), which often means *generations*, is in many places better translated as *account* or *history*. (See: BDB)

24-HOUR DAYS

The final meaning refers to days of 24-hours. The most basic way of defining a day was from evening to evening, which is indicated in the text by *evening and morning*. The ancient Israelites, contrary to us, started their new days at sunset. Thus, Friday night right after sunset would already be considered the Sabbath and the day would end Saturday evening at around the same time.

Another way to indicate a regular day of 24-hours is by *hayom hazeh* היום הזה which is translated as “the very same day.” In Gen 7:13 we read: “On the very same day Noah...entered the ark.” Likewise, Gen 17:23 states: “So Abraham took... all who were born in his house... and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day...” In both of these passages, the word *day* makes reference to the same day – that is the 24-hour period they were currently in. It is clear that the word here does not refer to an indefinite period of time but rather to a 24-hour period.

DAYS WITH A CARDINAL NUMBER

When a cardinal number (one, two, three, four, etc.) appears in front of the word *day*, it refers only and always to one (or many) period(s) of 24 hours. There are numerous verses which elucidate this point. “But Jacob said to him... ‘And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.’” (Gen 33:13)

What Jacob is saying to his brother Esau is that there is a limit to how far little children and cattle can go in one day. The reference is clearly to one 24-hour period of time. Numbers 11:20 clarifies the usage even more. The children of Israel complained against the LORD because they did not have meat like they had in Egypt, the very place where God rescued them from. In frustration with his stubborn children, He declares that they will have more meat than they know what to do with: “You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you...” (Num 11:20)

Here the meaning of *day* or *days* is clear. There would be not just one, or two, or five, or ten, or twenty days, but a whole month's worth of meat. The meaning of the word *day* is augmented by the contrast with the word “month” *chodesh* חודש, which only refers to the time of about thirty days or one cycle of the moon and never anything else.

Further proof that *yom day* refers to a 24-hour day when preceded by cardinal numbers is found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. God, in explaining the judgment coming upon the world, says, “For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights...” (Gen 7:4) God gave Noah another seven days – not long, indefinite periods of time, but seven 24-hour days, until the floodwaters would come. Indeed after seven literal days, the waters of the flood came: “And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth.” (Gen 7:10) Verse 11 surpasses the previous two in precision by telling us exactly when this occurred. “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up...” (Gen 7:11)

This description is not just about some indefinite period of time. It was on the 17th of the second month, a very real time that the flood came. And then the record (verse 24) tells us specifically how long the waters were on the earth. “And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.” One hundred and fifty days in the text is not some long, undetermined era. Some people would contend that the days of the flood are irrelevant since Noah was simply a mythical or an allegorical figure. However, if one accepts the words of Jesus and the New Testament, then one must also accept that Noah was a real person who lived through the worldwide flood. (See Mat 24:37, 38, Luke 17:26, 27, 1Pet 3:20, 2Pet 2:5, Heb 11:7) Thus, because Jesus and the disciples accepted Noah as real, we must understand the days described in Gen as being real, 24-hour days.

The list of verses in the Hebrew Scriptures is extensive which confirms that every time a number comes before day it is referring to a 24-hour day; a few more examples clearly illustrate the principle. “Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob...” (Gen 30:36). “Forty days were required for [Joseph]... and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days” (Gen 50:3). “And seven days passed after the LORD had struck the river” (Exod 7:25). “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel” (Exod 12:15). “Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none” (Exod 16:26). “Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land?” (2 Samuel 24:13). Although there are too many verses to list them all here, throughout the entire Hebrew Scriptures, in every case where a number precedes *day*, it deals with the literal usage of *day* rather than an indefinite period of time.

The days in Gen 1, therefore, should be understood as literal, 24-hour days due to the usage of the limitation of *the evening and the morning* (see also Num 28:3, 4) found throughout Genesis 1 (the fact that the sun was not created until the fourth day is irrelevant since the rotation of the earth is what constitutes a day – the light source is immaterial). Even though the evidence points to literal, 24-hour days in Genesis one, the old-earth camp is still persuaded that these days are long periods of time rather than normal (24-hour) days. They suggest that the usage of ordinal numbers (first, second, third, fourth etc.) rather than cardinals denotes different eras of time and thus the *first* era (day) is followed by the *second* era (day) etc. where each day equals an unknown but extremely long period of time in which the slow processes of evolution, with God's help, had enough time according to Darwin's model of slow change.

There are some fatal flaws to this theory, however, from a biblical perspective. First of all, the first day of Genesis in the Hebrew is not actually defined as the first day, but rather as *day one* or *yom echad* יום אחד. The word *echad* is the cardinal number *one* and should not be understood as first ראשון *rishon*, but as in the series *one, two, three, four, etc.* We have seen previously that any time *day* occurs with a cardinal number, it always refers to a literal, 24-hour day. So we can conclude that the first day of creation was 24 hours.

DAYS WITH ORDINAL NUMBERS

Ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) are also used in a literal sense when used with *day* just like cardinal numbers. Ezekiel records that on a particular (literal) day of a particular month of a particular year God again spoke to him: “Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me” (Ezek 24:1). Likewise, Ezra records the exact day when the temple was finished: “Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius” (Ezra 6:15).

We find in the book of Numbers a usage of ordinal numbers that is parallel to Gen 1. In Gen 1 we saw the chronology of creation described as *one day* and then the *second day*, the *third day* etc. In Numbers 29, God lists the various sacrifices and on which day they are to be performed for the feast of Tabernacles. Notice that the days listed have the same ordinal numbers as used in Gen. “On the second day (יום השני *yom hasheni*) present twelve young bulls...On the third day (יום השלישי *yom hashlishi*) present...On the fourth day (יום הרביעי *yom harevi'i*) present... On the fifth day (יום החמישי *yom hachamishi*) present...” (Num 29:17, 20, 23, 26).

The days above were most certainly real and literal days in which specific things had to happen; they were not long drawn out periods of time. The text employs the use of ordinal numbers as does Gen 1 but here we do not conclude that those days were indefinite periods of time; they were simply days. Thus even with ordinal numbers a *day* is just a literal, 24-hour day.

A DAY IS A THOUSAND YEARS?

Nevertheless Peter’s statement “...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2Peter 3:8) has been used to supposedly prove that time and numbers in the Bible do not have concrete value and therefore the *days* in Gen 1 could have lasted one thousand years or perhaps even one million. The key to understanding is the phrase “with the Lord” with which Peter describes God's perspective to time and not man's; he is not saying that one thousand years are equal to one day but rather in God's economy, time is radically different and when we think that the Lord is “slack” (2Pet 3:9) we should think again. Peter wants to make clear that God's timetable is different from ours, hence “with the Lord”.

NUMBERS ARE LITERAL IN THE BIBLE

Another objection made against the creation account is that numbers and days are allegorical or figurative. Signers of the Clergy Letter Project suggest the creation account is not meant to convey literal truth but simply “timeless truths.” Though there are many examples that can be brought to demonstrate that claim to be false, for brevity’ sake we will only compare the texts of Jeremiah, Daniel, and 2 Chronicles.

God told the prophet Jeremiah that the people of Judea would “serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (Jer 25:11) Approximately seventy years later, Daniel tells us, “I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:2). Keep in mind, though the book of Daniel contains many visions, Daniel chapter 9 is him

explaining an event in his life; in other words, it ought to be read as literally and historically true. In his time of prayer he interprets the prophecy of Jeremiah in unmistakable terms – he understood from the prophet Jeremiah that God would keep His people in Babylon for seventy literal years. He does not try to look for a hidden message as to what God meant by seventy years, he assumes them to be literal: exactly seventy years after the first deportation, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem.

Daniel interprets and confirms that the curse given in Deuteronomy was 100% literally fulfilled through the destruction of Jerusalem. “As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us.” (Daniel 9:13) He does not seek to interpret away God’s words as allegory as many do today. Daniel was much closer to and was a part of the writing of the Hebrew Scriptures – less than seventy years after Jeremiah. His own writings are also considered canonical, inspired, and authoritative. If he took such writings as literal and straightforward, how much more should we? The literal interpretation of Daniel regarding Jeremiah’s prophecy is also shared by the writer of 2 Chronicles in extremely plain language: “...to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah ... As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years...that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled...” (2 Chron 36:20, 21) The author of Chronicles reiterates the period of seventy years to fulfill Jeremiah’s prophecy. There was no question in the writer’s mind that this prophecy was fulfilled completely and literally.

THE LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR OF GENESIS ONE AND TWO

The claim is often made that the creation accounts of Gen 1 (really 1:1 – 2:3) and Gen 2 (really 2:4 – 2:25) are contradictory. Thus, it is suggested that even if chapter 1 had been written with a literal intent, chapter 2, with its supposed contradictions, would render a literal reading impossible. The principal difference in the two chapters is that chapter 1 deals with creation from a panoramic view while chapter 2 is concerned specifically with the *how* of the creation of man and the *what* of man’s role in God’s creation. Let us analyze biblically and linguistically the key passages the full range of the key Hebrew words in Gen 1:1–2, the grammar of chapter 1 and also 2:4, 2:5-7, and 2:19.

Genesis 1:1 is the first act of creation and not simply a title which is substantiated by the Hebrew grammar. The typical sequence of a narrative is to start with a verb in the simple past tense. (Buth 2005:52) Gen 1:1 begins with *bara* – *created* in the simple past tense thereby signifying something new or dramatic to the story. Verse 2 is a parenthetical statement explaining what is meant exactly by the creation of the “earth”. The action picks up again in verse 3 with the use of a sequential past tense (*vayyiqtol*). The use of a different kind of Hebrew verb marks quite clearly that the writer understood the actions of verse 3 to be a continuation of the previous two verses. Dr. Randall Buth notes that this is the normal storytelling construction in biblical Hebrew.

The sequential past tense is used to present the next event in the story or the next event in a sentence. If the writer wants to mark a break in the flow of the story for any reason, then they do not use the sequential past tense. For a past event they would need to put

something other than the verb at the beginning of the sentence and then use a simple past tense (Buth 2005: 52).

Not only is verse 3 a continuation of verse 1, but the entire creation account of Gen 1 uses the sequential past tense. Consequently, according to the grammar, there is no break between verse 1 and the rest of the chapter and hence no gap of years between any of the first three verses since they are all part of that first day. Light was created on the first day, along with the very building blocks necessary for even the light to shine, which was energized by the movement of the Holy Spirit over the face of the deep. There exists, therefore, no reason to believe that the length of the first day was any different than that of any other, neither was there a previous world that fell only to be recreated, nor was there even a geologic creation some billions of years earlier (as the Gap Theory suggests). The first three verses of Gen 1, the first day, all occurred within 24 hours just like the rest of the days.

BARA AND ASA

Before God created anything, there was only God. There was no universe, no vacuum of space, nothing whatsoever. There was only God. He created something completely new (*bara*), a space/dimension (from nothing) called שמים *shamaim* (heavens) which he filled with ארץ *eretz* (earth-material) which was in the process of being formed and was not completed. Keil & Delitzsch underscore the connection between verses one and two “it is evident that the void and formless state of the earth was not uncreated, or without beginning...the heaven and earth, as God created them in the beginning, were not the well-ordered universe, but the world in its elementary form; (Keil & Delitzsch 1866: Gen 1:1) God essentially created the building blocks before beginning construction. The term “earth” here must be directly interpreted by verse two and hence understood as the raw material, the elements that God created out of nothing that He would form and fashion later to His liking. The creation of light was the third creative act.

A key word in Genesis 1:1 is ברא (*bara*) *created* and is used a total of 53 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. The basic and most widely used form of the word (used in Gen 1) has the general meaning of *create, shape or form*. It has been suggested that the word *bara* used here in Gen is a different type of action than the word עשה (*asa* – *do, make, fashion or produce*) used in Exodus 20:11 where God says that he made the heavens and earth in six days.

Bara and *asa* are for the most part synonymous with one important distinction between them: *bara* is used only of God’s actions and never of man’s. There are countless examples of where man can *asa* (*do or make*); however, only God can *bara*. There is by implication creation *ex nihilo*, but the major thrust of the word *bara* lies in its use by God only and on the initiation of something new. The TWOT notes concerning *asa* and its distinction from *bara*: “The word *bara*’ carries the thought of the initiation of the object involved. It always connotes what only God can do and frequently emphasizes the absolute newness of the object created. The word *asa* is much broader in scope...“*asa* may simply connote the act of fashioning the objects involved in the whole creative process.” (TWOT: 1708 *asa*)

As the TWOT notes, the use of *asa* is a broader term than *bara*, but we see from the context in which the words are used that they can be used interchangeably to a large extent. Perhaps the best example is Isaiah 45:18 where the three words that are used, *create, form* and *make* all

describe the same event – God’s creation of the heavens and earth. “...who created (*bore* בּוֹרֵא) the heavens, who is God, who formed (*yotzer* יוֹצֵר) the earth and made (*oseh* עוֹשֶׂה) it, who has established it, who did not create (*braha* בְּרָאָה) it in vain, who formed (*yatzarah* יִצְרָה) it to be inhabited...” (Isa 45:18)

This verse is incredibly specific in regards to the creation of the earth. First of all, God declares that He is the one who created (*bore* בּוֹרֵא) the heavens – which could also be translated as *Creator of the heavens*. Next He says that He is the former (*yotzer* יוֹצֵר) and the maker (*asah* עוֹשֶׂה) of the earth, a seeming confirmation of the supposed distinction of *bara* and *asa*. However, God continues by saying that He created it, where the word *it*, is the third person singular feminine possessive suffix (the word *it* is attached to the word *created*). The word *it* must refer to *earth* because the *earth* is a singular feminine noun and *heavens* is a dual masculine noun. Clearly and unmistakably God declares that He created, formed, and made the earth. Thus, to suggest that Exodus 20:11 (“For in six days the LORD made [*asa*] the heavens and the earth...”) is not parallel in thought to Gen 1 is to ignore the evidence in favor of one’s own theory.

TOHU VAVOHU

The matter God created in Gen 1:1 was still in no particular shape or form: “The earth was without *form, and void* (תְּהוֹ וּבְהוֹ *tohu vavohu*)” (Gen 1:2a) There was no planet earth as we know it today, but the raw material that God had created (according to Gen 1:2b) was still in no special shape. It was still unformed and unorganized. These words do not in any way suggest that there had been an earlier creation, as proposed by the Gap Theory. They do not suggest that the earth was a wasteland waiting to be recreated. The word *tohu* in Gen 1:2, according to the TWOT: “Refers not to the result of a supposed catastrophe...but to the formlessness of the earth before God’s creative hand began the majestic acts described in the following verses.” (TWOT *Tohu*)

Furthermore, the text says that the earth “was without form and void” and not “became without form, and void” as the Gap Theorists argue. (See also: Fields 1978:58). The Hebrew והָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה *vehaaretz hayta* is what is known grammatically as a copulative clause. (See Kautzsch and Cowley 1910:484) The Hebrew letter *vav* (or *waw*) attached to the noun (the earth) acts as a type of parenthetical statement (See: Joüon, P., & T. Muraoka 2005) that is to suggest a reading: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (*Now* the earth was without form, and void.)” Thus the earth was desolate and void (*tohu vavohu*) at the very beginning of God’s creation and did not *become* (per the Gap Theory) as a result of God recreating it.

GENESIS 2:5 – 2:7

A casual reading of Genesis 2:5 to 2:7 “Before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown...there was no man to till the ground...” in English it appears to critics to indicate that man was created before plants and shrubs. Is this referring to all of the vegetation on the entire planet or is it more defined? The vegetation referred to is designated by the word *field*, which appears twice in the text. שִׂיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה (*siach hasadeh*) *plant of the field* and עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה (*esev hasadeh*) *herb of the field* are the technical terms that we must not overlook. Both of them are in the construct state, which simply means that two nouns are considered one unit. It is very similar in English where *bicycle tire* is not referring to *bicycle* and *tire*, but a type of tire,

that is, the *tire of a bicycle*. So too, we could just as well translate these as *field plant* and *field herb* – two specific items. Keil & Delitzsch clarify that the planting of the garden, not the creation of the plants, is what is being referred to:

The growing of the shrubs and sprouting of the herbs is different from the creation or first production of the vegetable kingdom, and relates to the growing and sprouting of the plants and germs which were called into existence by the creation... שדה [sadeh] is not 'the widespread plain of the earth, the broad expanse of land,' but a field of arable land, soil fit for cultivation, which forms only a part of the "earth" or "ground." Keil & Delitzsch 1866: Gen 2:5-2:7)

GENESIS 2:19

Genesis 2:19 is frequently considered to be a contradiction to chapter one since it would seem God first formed Adam and *then* the animals "God formed every beast...and brought them to Adam..." (Gen 2:19) The Hebrew word *formed* (ויצר *vayitzer*) is in the past tense. This form, however, can potentially express a simple past tense and the past of the past, known grammatically as the past perfect (see: Buth: 1994 and C. John Collins 1995; ESV, NRS use this form as well). The past perfect is used to express any action that happened prior to another, both occurring in the past. For example, Johnny *had eaten* three hamburgers before he ordered dessert. The past perfect, *had eaten* was finished before the action of *ordering*. Thus the word *vayitzer* can signify either the simple past or past perfect and *formed* could just as well have been translated as *had formed*. (See Pipa: 1998) The Hebrew supports either which would then yield a plausible translation, "Out of the ground the LORD God **had** formed every beast of the field...and brought them to Adam..." The use of the past perfect here, grammatically speaking, clears up the order of creation events perfectly: God first created the animals, then created man and then brought the animals that He had created to man.

THE VALUE OF LITERARY GENRE

A consideration raised by the Clergy Letter Project is that the creation account is not to be read literally but allegorically or figuratively. The Letter states: "Many of the beloved stories found in the Bible – the Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the ark – convey timeless truths about God, human beings, and the proper relationship between Creator and creation...Religious truth is of a different order from scientific truth. Its purpose is not to convey scientific information but to transform hearts." (Clergy Letter Project, 2004) People holding to this view often claim that the literary genre of Gen 1 and 2 is poetic rather than prose. They therefore suggest the account cannot be a literal, accurate, straightforward, and chronological summary of the actual events; it is simply using figurative, allegorical, metaphorical language to teach us "timeless truths."

A survey of parallel accounts written in both prose and poetry, however, demonstrates that regardless of a passage's literary genre, (poetic or prose), it is still to be understood in a literal fashion. For example, God's commanding of Moses to strike the rock so that water would come out of it (Exod 17:6) offers an example of prose that was retold in a literal but poetic fashion by later, biblical writers. Asaph uses very concrete words to describe the historical fact of the rock

being struck and water coming out, such as: “we have heard”, “our fathers have told us”, (Ps 78:3) “(God) appointed a law...to make known”. He makes it abundantly clear that striking the rock was a very real, historical event and that the events occurred as stated. There is no sense of allegory whatsoever in his language even though he retells the account using poetic parallelism (chiasmus A, B).

- Give ear, O my people, to my law; (A) Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. (B)
- He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; (A) He made the waters stand up like a heap. (B)
- **He split the rocks in the wilderness**, (A) and gave them drink in abundance like the depths. (B) **He also brought streams out of the rock**, (A) and caused waters to run down like rivers. (B) (Ps 78:1, 15, 16)

The striking of the rock and water coming forth is reiterated in Psalm 105:41 where another Psalmist states: “He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it ran in the dry places like a river.” Both of these writers have interpreted the events in Exodus literally and straightforwardly. (See also Paul’s recounting in 1 Cor 10:1-6)

Exodus 15:1 is another example of poetry as historical fact a song (poetry) to the Lord: “Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying...” Exodus 15 is the poetic form of chapter 14 which was written in prose – that is, a plain straightforward kind of language. What we must not miss, however, is both the prose in chapter 14 and the poetry in 15 tell a true and historic account of what happened at the crossing of the Red Sea. A historic account expressed in poetry in no way precludes it from also being an accurate and true account.

Therefore, whether or not Genesis creation account is poetry or prose or even a mix of both makes no difference. We see this proven by looking at other biblical passages that speak of creation. For example, after taking the children of Israel out of Egypt, God led them to a place called Mount Sinai. We read in Exodus 20 which is written as prose, He gave them the law and therein he states that he created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God.” (Exod 20:9) Certainly God is talking about a regular workweek. The people were to work six (literal) days and then they were to take a day off, something very different from the custom of the peoples around them, who generally didn’t take any days off. God gives the reason and history behind the seven-day week: “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.” (Exod 20:11, 31:15, 17) God unequivocally declares that He created everything in only six days. Like the other times that a cardinal number appears before the word *day* (*yom* יום), here too it is used as a literal 24-hour day. God makes perfectly clear how long he took to make the universe (just in case anyone should be confused). If these days are not taken as literal days then neither can the Sabbath be taken as literal. Yet the Sabbath as a literal day, starting at sunset Friday evening and lasting until the following Saturday evening, has always been considered a literal span of 24-hours so we can safely conclude that the six days of creation are also to be taken literally.

There is no way to circumvent this declaration: the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, observed for 24-hours every week, is a sign between the Jewish people and God. The Israelites knew exactly how long it was – for not knowing would cost them their life. The Sabbath was/is

24 hours and therefore, so are all of the other days of the week, which is how long it took God to create the heavens and the earth. Hence God himself interprets the former revelation given in Genesis one and two as literal.

FRAMEWORK HYPOTHESIS

The framework hypothesis posits that the layout of the creation events is not chronological but theological and thus we cannot understand the days (and creative events) as being literal. For example Gordon Wenham, a proponent of the framework hypothesis argues that, "...the distribution of the various creative acts to six days, has been seized on and interpreted over-literally...The six day schema is but one of several means employed in this chapter to stress the system and order that has been built into creation." (Wenham 1987: 39, 40) Yet the fact that the Genesis creation account is beautifully written does not detract from the author's intent to convey a literal and factual account.

This is confirmed by many biblical scholars, who do not believe that Gen 1:1-2:3 is the actual scientific explanation of where we came from, yet nevertheless argue on the basis of linguistic and literary criteria that the Genesis creation account was written as a literal rendering of what the author believed to have truly happened and hence the days of Gen 1 and 2 are literal, definite periods of time. Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad states, "The seven days are unquestionably to be understood as actual days [...]" (von Rad 1972:65).

Oxford Hebrew professor James Barr, who does not actually believe Genesis as factual, states emphatically concerning the writer's intent, "the creation 'days' were six literal days of a 144-hour period" (Barr 1978: 40). Barr later adds in a 1984 letter:

...so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Gen 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: 1) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience, 2) the figures contained in the Gen genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the biblical story, 3) Noah's flood was understood to be world-wide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark.' (Barr 1984)

Gerhard F. Hasel in his article *The "Days" Of Creation in Genesis 1* likewise notes the conclusion of liberal scholars:

the creation "days" cannot be anything but literal 24-hour days. They are fully aware of the figurative, non-literal interpretations of the word "day" in Gen 1 for the sake of harmonization with the long ages demanded by the evolutionary model of origins. Yet, they insist on the grounds of careful investigations of **the usage of "day" in Gen 1 and elsewhere that the true meaning and intention of a creation "day" is a literal day of 24 hours** (Hasel 1994, emphasis mine).

Hasel further argues how:

the 'literary genre' redefinition of the creation account is intended to remove the creation account from informing modern readers on "how" and "in what manner" and in what time God created the world. It simply wishes to affirm minimalistically that God is Creator. And that affirmation is meant to be a theological, nonscientific statement which has no impact on how the world and universe came into being and developed subsequently. (Hasel 1994)

Thus what Wenham and others have discovered about the literary style of Genesis only serves to magnify its author, God, and the literary considerations in no way detract from a literal interpretation of the days and events contained therein. Furthermore and for the record, Walter Kaiser states in his study on Genesis 1-11; "we are dealing with the genre of historical narrative-prose, interspersed with some lists, sources, sayings, and poetical lines." (Kaiser 1970: 61) Therefore the attempt to relegate it as non-literal literature is an unwarranted effort to dismiss the biblical cosmology as myth.

CONCLUSION: THE LANGUAGE OF CREATION PROVES A LITERAL SEVEN-DAYS CREATION

The biblical creation account can only be describing a period of seven literal 24-hour days. The linguistic foundation is found in the usage of the word *day* (*yom* יום) because every time it is used in conjunction with a cardinal or ordinal number, the meaning is always and without exception limited to the period of a regular and literal 24-hour day. God Himself reiterates that He created the heavens and the earth in six days, which is why He instructs man to work six days and then to take the seventh off. We know from history that the Hebrews have always taken the six-day workweek literally and have considered the seventh day to be a day of rest. Because God tells us twice in Exodus (20:11 and 31:17) that those were literal days, our only plausible conclusion regarding the six (plus one) days in Genesis is that they are to be taken as literal, 24-hour days. There is wide acceptance that the writer of Genesis believed that God created in six literal days. We need not and cannot conclude that they were six indefinite periods of time, at least not if we are to take everything else in the Bible seriously.

The only reason to conclude that the six days of creation were long periods of time is if we seek to harmonize the Bible with the model of (geological, chemical and biological) evolution. However, if we simply seek to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, then the interpretation of Genesis 1 is clear: God created the heavens and the earth in six literal 24-hour days and rested on the seventh. We therefore conclude that there is no room for a biblical interpretation which includes an evolutionary process of billions of years during creation; God emphatically declares to have done it in six, literal days.

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