

GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

The Days of Creation – Literal or Literary?

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse "sky." Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. ¹²The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons and for days and years. ¹⁵They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night—as well as the stars. ¹⁷God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." ²³Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." ²⁹God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, ³⁰for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. ²On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

Genesis 1:3-2:1

Reasons for actual, literal, chronological, 24-hour days: (Adapted from Dr. Robert Gentry)

1. _____.

The preponderant usage of the word "day" (Hebrew *yom*) in the Old Testament is of a normal diurnal period. The overwhelming majority of its 2,304 appearances in the Old Testament clearly refer either to a normal, full day-and-night cycle, or to the lighted portion of that cycle.

A good rule in exegesis:

2. _____.

Moses relentlessly qualifies each of the six creation days by "evening and morning." Outside of Genesis 1 the words "evening" and "morning" appear in statements thirty-two times in the Old Testament, presenting the two parts defining a normal day (e.g., Ex. 16:13; 18:13; 27:21).

3. _____.

Genesis 1 attaches a numeral to each of the creation days: first, second, third, etc. Moses affixes numerical adjectives to *yom* 119 times in his writings. These always signify literal days, as in circumcision on the "eighth day" (Lev. 12:3; cp. Num. 33:38).

4. _____.

When *yom* appears in numbered series it always specifies natural days (e.g., Ex. 12:15-16; 24:16; Lev. 23:39; Num. 7:12-36; 29:17ff). Genesis 1 has a series of consecutively numbered days for a reason: to indicate sequentially flowing calendar days.

5. _____.

The word *yom* in Genesis 1 defines Days 4-6 — *after* God creates the sun expressly for marking off days (Gen. 1:14, 18). Surely these last three days of creation are normal days. Yet nothing in the text suggests a change of temporal function for *yom* from the *first* three days: they are measured by the same temporal designator (*yom*), along with the same qualifiers (numerical adjectives and "evening and morning").

6. _____.

The Scriptures specifically pattern man's work week after God's own original creation week (Ex. 20:9-11; 31:17). It outlines that this is not for purposes of *analogy*, but *imitation*.

7. _____.

Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 also teach that God created the heavens and the earth "in six days" (*yammim*). "Ages" are never expressed by the word *yammim*. The plural *yammim* occurs 858 times in the Old Testament, and always refers to normal days. In Exodus 20:11, God sums up His creative activity in a way that not only comports with, but actually *demand*s a six day creative process.

8. _____.

The Jewish practice is to reckon days from *evening to evening*. Genesis 1 presents literal days reckoned according to the *non-ritual* pattern — evening closing the daylight time, followed by morning which closes the darkness, thereby *beginning a new day* (e.g., Gen. 19:33-34; Ex. 10:13; 2 Sam. 2:32).

9. _____.

Had Moses intended that six days represent six *eras*, he could have chosen a more fitting expression: *olam*. This word is often translated "forever," but it also means a long period of time (e.g., Ex 12:24; 21:6; 27:20; 29:28; 30:21). Furthermore, he should not have qualified the days with "evening and morning."

10. _____.

Even liberals and neo-evangelicals who deny six day creationism recognize Moses *meant* literal days.

But does it really matter?

First, a literal Creation account is essential for an orthodox understanding of _____ – what we understand about God's Word.

Second, a literal Creation account is essential for an orthodox understanding of _____ – what we understand about God.

Third, a literal Creation account is essential for an orthodox understanding of _____ – what we understand about People.

Other doctrines formed by a right understanding of Creation:

_____ – what we understand about Satan and his influence on people today.

_____ – what we understand about the source, nature, and effects of sin.

_____ – what we understand about the person, nature, and work of Jesus.

_____ – what we understand about the need for, offer of, and provision of salvation.

_____ – what we understand about the Holy Spirit.

_____ – what we believe about what is to happen in the future.

Conclusion - So what's the problem, theologically speaking, if the creation account were not literally true?