

The Creation Days: How Long Did it Take?

First Things

We must first affirm the absolute interpretive priority of God's inerrant, inspired, and infallible revelation in Scripture.

John Frame wrote, "Creation is an act of God alone, by which, for his own glory, he brings into existence everything in the universe, things that had no existence prior to his creative word."¹ The creation account was a real historical event.



The Days Question

Doctrine of God: Let's Get this Right

1) We must avoid Monism

Monism argues that everything has its origin in some "thing." There is unity of origin for all things – more narrowly a unity of substance and essence. Subsequently, such a view particularly denies that humanity is a body and soul (duality). Christianity teaches that "out of nothing" means the Universe did not emanate from him. God did not possess the mystical properties of the Universe and then shoot them out like a canon.

2) We must avoid Pantheism

We are "one" with the universe, and God is part of the world. God is literally *in* everything.

Derek Kidner writes, "[This] leaves no room for notions of a universe that is self-existent, or struggled for, or random, or a divine emanation; and the absence of any intermediary implies an extremely rich content for the word 'said.'"²

¹ Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian*, 185.

² Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 46.

A. *The Literal 24-Hour View*

This is the most literary straightforward readings of the options. This view asserts that the days of creation are normal, solar days, arranged in sequential order, and it held by those considered young-Earth creationists (6-10K years). This view affirms that one should take the language of *yom* literally, unless there is good reason to do otherwise.

From Scripture

1. First, many other passages in Scripture use the Hebrew word for day (*yom*) in a 24-hour, solar day. (Certainly not exhaustive list).
 - a. Historical Narratives
 - i. Genesis 7:4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."
 - ii. Genesis 27:2 He said, "Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death.
 - iii. Genesis 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.
 - iv. Deuteronomy 4:32 "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth..."
 1. The "day" is not an age, eon, or non-literal idea but it was a set day that he created man.
 - b. Poetic literature
 - i. Job 38:12 "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place..." (ESV).
 1. This is referring to the literal morning back in Gen 1:5.

Defense from History

1. The consensus from the greatest thinkers and interpreters for the Church is a creation of normal 24h days, both Western and Eastern Orthodox.³
2. Ambrose and Augustine
3. John Calvin

B. *The Day-Age View*

This view affirms that the days of creation are *six sequential, long periods of time* rather than six 24-hour days. Proponents believe the age of Earth is tens of thousands to billions of years of age, most often based on modern scientific observations/theories. This view emerged in the mid-1800s notably from Arnold Guyot.

³ Dr. Terry Mortenson on December 1, 2002 "Orthodoxy and Genesis: What the Fathers Thought" (11.27.19)

1. Advocates point out the necessity for long periods of time required for what transpired on each day, namely the sixth day in the creation of humanity.
2. The seventh day is an everlasting day, implying that the other days may be longer than 24 hours.
 - a. The lack of “morning and evening”
 - b. Hebrews 4:4-11
3. God’s days are not necessarily like our days.
 - a. Ps 90:4 “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day just gone by...”
4. Genesis 2:4 uses *yom* (Hb: day) to refer to *all six days*.
 - a. “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in *the day* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.”
5. Hosea 6:2
 - a. “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.”

C. The Analogical Day View

This view asserts that the days of Genesis 1 are God’s days of work and not man’s. Consequently, the days of Genesis 1 are analogous to, but distinct from, our days of activity. Genesis 1 is not about an historical account of the exact details and order of the Creation but a formative didactic to understand our given cadence to work/rest.

1. The absence of morning and evening on the seventh day indicates that the day did not end (cf. Heb 4) and this implies that day seven is not an ordinary, 24-hour period.
2. The rest of God and the rest of humans are compared in analogical but not identical language elsewhere in Scriptures (Exodus 20:8; Exodus 31:17).
3. A symbolic week
 - a. Our week is the symbol of God’s week. The creation week is the archetypal week to which all earthly weeks are to point. Just as our marriage symbolizes Christ and his church, or David's throne symbolizes Christ’s throne. Thus, our Lords day rest symbolizes God’s rest on day seven.⁴

⁴ Peter Wallace, “The Archetypal Week: A Defense of the Analogical Day View” April 9, 2002.

D. The Framework View

This view asserts that the six days of creation are presented *as* normal solar days. This distinguishes it from the day-age or analogical views, which argue that *yom* can represent a long era of time, as well as from the view that the length of *yom* is indeterminate. These days function in the picture of the larger workweek, which is figurative.

1. The Day 1/Day 4 conundrum is an instance of a non-sequential or topical arrangement in the creation account.
2. The narrative functions in a literary structure where the creative works are topically ordered.
3. These days of creation are historical events that actually occurred.
4. Human author(s) employed certain literary features to provide a structure for the account.

A 1 + 1 + 2 Pattern [8 creative works fulfilled over 6 days]

One creation fiat Let there be light	One creation fiat Let there be lights
One creation fiat Let there be an expanse to separate	One creation fiat Let the waters teem and let birds fly
Two creation fiats Let the dry land appear Let the earth sprout vegetation	Two creation fiats Let the earth bring forth living creatures Let us make man

A Two-Triad Pattern

CREATION KINGDOMS	CREATURE KINGS
Day 1. Light	Day 4. Luminaries
Day 2. Sky Seas	Day 5. Sea creatures Winged creatures
Day 3. Dry land Vegetation	Day 6. Land animals Man
THE CREATOR KING Day 7. Sabbath	

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished [days 1–3], and all the host of them [i.e., the great crowds of all that filled the heavens and the earth].”⁵

“The second triad of days presents creature kings (vassals) whose roles in the hierarchy of creation are earthly reflections of the royal rule of the Creator enthroned above.”⁶ All the created realms and regents of the six days are subordinate vassals of God, who takes his royal Sabbath rest as the *Creator King* on the seventh day.

5. Historical research of ancient cultures, from the late 19th Century and forward, has led many to assume that Genesis 1-2, while giving real historical events, is apologizing (defending) true religion over and against the false religions of the Ancient Near East and Egypt. This apologetic employed by Moses, was a response to defend the true God who creates by his word alone.

E. Theistic Evolution

1. **Uncommon Descent (Special Act of Creation)** – There was change over billions of years; yet, Adam and Eve were a special act of the creation at God’s appointed time. God created homosapiens (Adam and Eve), and they are separate from the hominids of evolutionary classification maintaining the covenant work of God throughout Scripture.
 - a. Genesis 1-3 are figurative or allegorical literature but are theological.
 - b. There was an historical Adam and Eve.
2. **Common Descent** - God employed the naturalistic, evolutionary process affirmed in classical Darwinism that has the appearance of purpose (Neo-Darwinism).
 - a. Genesis 1-3 are figurative or allegorical literature, not factual history.
 - b. Adam and Eve were not historical.
 - c. Christianity denies positions arguing that we are here by some mindless processional unfolding of one simple thing into all the complex diversity witnessed today by some projection of our “enlightened” 20th Century sensibilities

Where is there Common Ground?

1. God created out of nothing and ordains all history.
2. Adam and Eve were our historical first-parents.
3. The Covenantal God worked in history, establishing Adam as the representative head.
4. There was no sin before Adam and Eve.
5. Moral and physical death came after Adam’s fall.

⁵ Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, 52.

⁶ Meredith G. Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony.” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48.1 (April 1996), 2–15, esp. 6.

6. Theistic evolution by *common* descent is not compatible with Scripture. Theistic evolution by *uncommon* descent is tenuous and not commonly held.

Theistic Evolution: Apologetic Considerations

1. Hebrews equates faith with a particular view of God's creation.
 - a. The universe is not self-existent or self-developed; God himself formed it.
 - b. The universe and everything in it was created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) rather than molded or evolved from pre-existing substances.
 - c. Genesis 2:7 is a special act of God inbreathing to make Adam a living creature.
2. Presuppositions that hold to the *absolute uniformity* of all physical laws and processes, as we know them today, are tenuous. It is a *BIG* assumption that they must have been the same across all time.
 - a. 2 Peter 3:5-7
 - b. i.e. Radiocarbon Dating
3. The Apparent Age discussion
 - a. Adam's naval
 - b. Light
 - c. Decay already present?
4. "According to their kinds"
 - a. Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25
5. A Culture of Pre-Existent Death
 - a. If Christ conquered death as the "Second Adam," why is death such a big deal if it was a natural order of things prior to the creation of the First Adam?
 - b. There is no exegesis in Scripture where "death" or "decay" is a good or normal reality. God certainly could have sustained via another source than dead, organic fossil fuels (i.e. his word – Gen 1:2; Col 1:16).