

Genesis 1:5ff

In any consideration of the time span of Creation's six days, one must *begin* with the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. For far too many interpret Genesis 1:1-2:3 based on current science, current theories, and the capabilities of today's nature, rather than on the nature of Almighty God. It all boils down to that: either we interpret God's word based on the *creation* we know—or the *God* we know. Or, stated a different way, do we take God at His word, or do we force His Spirit-inspired text to conform to what today's science claims is possible? Do we confine God to humanity's constrictive box, forcing Him to play by *our* rules, or do we accept and believe that He can do whatever He sets His mind to?

So we begin with some of what God's word says about who He is and His capabilities—such as Jeremiah 32:17.

'Ah Lord Yahweh! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You...'

The Lord Jesus concurred:

And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25–26)

The prophet Isaiah does a splendid job of describing the unlimited power of our God.

Read Isaiah 40:12, 15.

Read Isaiah 40:21-26. ↗

See also Romans 1:18-20.

Every reference in the Bible to "God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*) or just "the Almighty" speaks of His unbounded omnipotence: God is absolutely capable to do *anything*. So if one subscribes to that, taking the Bible as God's word on the matter, then one cannot, at the same time, chip away at His omnipotence by suggesting that, "*based on what we know*" about geology, carbon dating, the age of this earth, it would be impossible for it to be created in only six calendar days. No, either God is capable or He is not.

Let's begin with what the text says in v5.

And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

That is, everything in vv1-5 God accomplished in one day. The operative word here in the Hebrew is *yom*, translated “day.” And the perennial question is, Does *yom* here (and, of course, throughout the extended passage) mean a twenty-four hour day, an age or eon—that is, an indeterminate period of time—or, as a few commentators would have it, a “day” in God’s eyes (Psalm 90:4). Thus, by necessity, the length of time for Creation is linked to the age of this earth, and there are several clues in the text itself to point us to a twenty-four hour day:

1. Verse five paints a picture of a literal, earthly day, with “God called the light day [*yom*] and the darkness He called night [*laylah*].” Just as any human being would describe it, “there was evening and there was morning, one day.”
2. As Leupold points out, “There ought to be no need of refuting the idea that *yom* means period [of time]. Reputable [Hebrew] dictionaries...know nothing of this notion.” Skinner agrees: “The interpretation of *yom* as aeon, a favourite resource of harmonists of science and revelation is opposed to the plain sense of the passage and has no warrant in Hebrew usage.” Finally, K&D concur: “If the days of creation are regulated by the recurring interchange of light and darkness, they must be regarded not as periods of time of incalculable duration, of years or thousands of years, but as simple earthly days.”
3. Remember, the entire Creation narrative, from the end of 1:1 to 1:31 is earth-centric. Why, then, would the Spirit inject the yardstick of eternity to describe a day?

So if we conclude that the days of Genesis Chapter One represent earthly, twenty-four hour days, how do we then answer those who claim that science demands an older earth that required millions of years to be created and become what it is today? Let’s consider just one example, the Grand Canyon in the United States; this from the National Park Service web site:

With one of the clearest exposures of the rock record and a long, diverse geologic history, Grand Canyon is an ideal place to gain a sense of geologic or “deep” time. The oldest rocks exposed in the canyon are ancient, 1,840 million years old. Conversely, the canyon itself is geologically young, having been carved in the last 6 million years. Even younger deposits, including ice age fossils in caves, 1,000 year-old lava flows in the western canyon, and recently deposited debris flows, bring Grand Canyon’s geologic record to the present. (Nation Park Service web site: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/age-of-rocks-in-grand-canyon.htm>)

It is probably safe to assume that most people who believe in a literal earthly week for Creation also believe in a relatively far younger earth—i.e., from the end of the first week to today—than would be necessary to form the Grand Canyon according to the time span just presented by the National Park Service. If so, how do we resolve this apparent conflict? ❏

This brings us to two terms commonly used to label these two camps: “old earth” and “new earth”—in the parlance meaning an earth millions or billions of years old, and an earth only thousands of years old. My proposal is that we adopt, but *redefine*, the term “old earth” to encompass both. Stay with me on this.

If we subscribe to the days of Creation being literal, earthly days of (at least approximately) twenty-four hours each, then this means that it was all accomplished in what would be familiar to us as six days. Let’s fast-forward in this first week to the third day in vv9-13. It was in this day that God separated the waters on the earth and thus revealed (or created; it’s hard to say which) dry land for the first time.

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

Note that each verse here ends either with the declaration “it was good,” or the statement “and it was so.” In other words, God repeatedly says, “Let... [something happen],” but the narrative confirms that this was not simply a command that somewhere down the line these things would occur—i.e., thousands of years later—but for them to occur *immediately*.

So when the dry land appears (*raah*, made visible) for the first time, we might imagine that this would be something like the raw stone of the earth’s crust raised above the water.

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

Yet note what all happens immediately within the very same day (“.... and it was so”).

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

Well now, this means that the “dry land” did not consist of raw slabs of steaming rock, but was complete with soil and nutrients suitable for vegetation (i.e., grass), plants or herbs—already bearing seeds, no less—and fruit trees sufficiently mature to be already bearing mature fruit with seeds. In other words within the brief span of one day God revealed dry land and created full-flowering gardens, meadows, and orchards.

Verse 12 confirms that this occurred immediately.

And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

The two—the first six days of Creation, and the age of this planet earth—are, admittedly, two separate issues, yet, as we are beginning to see, inevitably intertwined.

Verses 26 to 31 of Chapter One state that within the sixth day of Creation God made both man and woman. Now let's fast-forward again to v7 in Chapter Two, to the more detailed narrative of the creation of man.

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.

Look at vv15-16.

Then Yahweh God took the man and set him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may surely eat..."

Here we have the evidence that God created man a mature human being; the first man did not begin life as a newborn baby (born from whom?). A baby would not be able to "cultivate" the garden in which he had been placed, nor could he reach the fruit hanging on the trees for sustenance. Likewise a baby would not be able to name all the "cattle and...birds of the sky and...every beast of the field."

Thus we see a pattern during the Creation of the heavens and the earth, of God creating things "ready to go," as it were. The world, its components of gardens and fields and rivers and mountains, and its inhabitants—man, woman, the beasts of the field—were not created each in its seminal state, but in a mature, developed state—a state that any scientist examining a mountain or chasm during these first days would declare "old," yet it had just been created out of nothing by the word of God!

Professor John C. Whitcomb (who, by the way, has spoken at our church), in his classic work *The Genesis Flood*, speaks of the creation effort itself imposing such "age" upon the earth.

This initial act of creation [in Genesis 1:1] quite evidently included the structure and materials of at least the earth's core and some sort of crust and surface materials. The first description given of its appearance is that of water ("the deep") covering its surface and of a dense shroud of darkness (Genesis 1:2) enveloping it. It seems reasonable that, even if the earth's creation was accomplished as an instantaneous act, its internal heat and the waters on its face would immediately have begun to perform works of profound geological significance.

Another good source in agreement with Whitcomb's thesis is *Carved in Stone: Geological Evidence of the Worldwide Flood*, by Dr. Timothy Clarey (Institute for Creation Research, Copyright © 2020).

He goes on in his work to make the case that the deluge itself—the great flood of Chapters Seven and Eight—would do even far more to chisel the earth with "age."

We have had, for a very long time, a “poster child” for the young-earth position: Archbishop Ussher.

The late Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher (1581-1656), basing his conclusion primarily on a literal interpretation of the king lists and genealogies in the OT, calculated—to the day!—that the earth was 4,004 years old; following his method, we would have to add to Ussher’s total approximately 350–400 more years, since he died 367 years ago. But just as the NT does not include every word spoken or every act done by Christ Jesus (John 21:25), the OT can be taken literally while still acknowledging that there are gaps in the king lists and genealogies—e.g., a “son” does not have to mean a literal next generation, but can simply mean a descendant, as it does in Matthew 1:1.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

The Bible does not list every person descended from Adam and Eve, or Noah, nor does it contain the name of every king or queen who ever ruled, so that is an inaccurate measure by which to ascertain the age of the earth. Yet because his estimation was included in most King James Bibles, many of us grew up taking Ussher’s figures as gospel truth. On the face of it, however, four thousand years would not be sufficient for all the historical civilizations and empires for which we have both documentation and solid archaeological evidence.

Yet there is a considerable span of possibilities between 4,404 years and 1,840 *million* years. I conclude that from the evidence of Scripture and from the physical evidence of this earth that our earth is older than Ussher’s calculations, but far, far younger than the calculations of today’s scientists. It is indeed an “old earth,” but much of that age was built into the earth from the beginning, with additional layers of age and weathering accomplished by the Deluge of Genesis Seven and Eight. And, of course, the earth has aged since then.

Most scientists, geologists, etc., begin from a position that it is simply nonsensical and impossible to take the Bible literally when it comes to things that should, by all rights, be relegated exclusively to science. But they forget—or deny outright—that it was Almighty God who *created* the science they so worship. Science—God’s created science—is correct; it is their *conclusions* that are incorrect.

Contrary to the fallen philosophies of this world, *we* are to begin from a position that nothing is impossible for an omnipotent Creator of the universe. If we find some of what He did, some of what He writes, confusing or even hard to grasp, that reflects a deficiency in our faith, not a deficiency in Him.

SESSION 7

What a Difference a Day Makes Genesis 1:5ff

The sovereignty and omnipotence of God

In any consideration of the time span of Creation's six days, one must begin with the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. For far too many interpret Genesis 1:1-2:3 based on current science, current theories, and the capabilities of today's nature, rather than on the nature of Almighty God. It all boils down to that: either we interpret God's word based on the creation we know—or the God we know. Or, stated a different way, do we take God at His word, or do we force His Spirit-inspired text to conform to what today's science claims is possible? Do we confine God to humanity's constrictive box, forcing Him to play by our rules, or do we accept and believe that He can do whatever He sets His mind to? (**Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:25–26; Isaiah 40:12-26**)

Created “Old”

Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so.

This means that the “dry land” (v9) did not consist of raw slabs of steaming rock, but was complete with soil and nutrients suitable for vegetation (i.e., grass), plants or herbs—already bearing seeds, no less—and fruit trees sufficiently mature to be already bearing mature fruit with seeds. In other words within the brief span of one day God revealed dry land and created full-flowering gardens, meadows, and orchards. Verse 12 confirms that this occurred immediately.

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Conclusion

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