

Rethinking the “Days” of Genesis 1 Genesis 1:1-2:3

INTRODUCTION

I. Overview of the Structure of Genesis 1:1-2:3

	Prologue	Creation of the Universe, Earth’s incompleteness	Gen. 1:1-2
<u>Formless</u> (Subdue)	Day 1	Creation of Light, separation from darkness	Gen. 1:3-5
	Day 2	Creation of Water, separation with expanse	Gen. 1:6-8
	Day 3	Creation of Vegetation, separation water & land	Gen. 1:9-13
<u>Void</u> (Fill)	Day 4	Creation of Stars, sun, & moon	Gen. 1:14-19
	Day 5	Creation of Birds and Marine/Aquatic Life	Gen. 1:20-23
	Day 6	Creation of Land Animals & Man	Gen. 1:24-31
	Day 7	God rested from his work	Gen. 2:1-3

The structure of each day is:

1. The day starts with “Then God said” (verses 3,6,9,14,20,24). Note that Day 3 has two statements of “Then God said” (verses 9,11) and Day 6 has three statements of “Then God said” (verses 24, 26, 29)
2. A description of God’s creative work
3. In the first three days God called or named what he created. Adam named the land animals and birds (2:19-20)
4. The day ends with “And there was evening and there was morning, a _____ day”
5. Note that Day 6 is expanded to include elements that the other days do not.
6. Day 7 is entirely different because God rested that day.

II. Reasons why each “day” may not represent 24 hours.

- A. It is not until “Day 4” that the stars and sun are created raising questions about how the day could be reckoned in Days 1-3 or what morning and evening really mean.
- B. The word “day” is used in three different ways in Genesis 1-2
 - 1) The light portion of a day-Genesis 1:5
 - 2) Both the light and dark portion of a day together-Genesis 1:5
 - 3) The period of time encompassing all of creation events-Genesis 2:4
- C. “Day” normally means a 24 hour period of time or the lighted portion of 24 hours but occasionally it can refer to a period of time such as “The Day of the Lord.”
- D. If God “rested” on the seventh day from creating does that mean he is now creating again or if not, are we still in the seventh day.
- E. Adoption of the meaning of 24 hours for “day” in Genesis 1 appears to create an irresolvable conflict between geological data and this interpretation of Genesis 1.

III. Is it appropriate to adjust Biblical interpretation based on scientific knowledge?

¹² **And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.** Isaiah 11:12 (NASB)

⁴ **Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun,** ⁵ **Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.** ⁶ **Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.** Psalms 19:4-6 (NASB)

⁸ **Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy** Psalms 98:8 (NASB)

III. What assumptions or presuppositions do we need to possibly rethink?

- A. Is the purpose of Genesis 1 to provide us with a chronological explanation of the order in which things were created or is the purpose of Genesis 1 for God to model to Adam how God subdued and filled the Earth so that Adam could fulfill his assignment?
- B. Is Genesis 1 arranged chronologically or topically in terms of how God created?
- C. Is God speaking from his perspective when he uses “day” or is he speaking from man’s perspective? Remember that God is describing in Days 1-5 and part of Day 6 what no person observed.
- D. Is the purpose of the days in Genesis 1 to provide a measurement of time or to provide a model of the work/rest cycle that is part of man’s rulership over the Earth?

IV. Conclusion: Just as the Gospels are historically true but are not arranged chronologically but topically, so I believe Genesis 1 is historically true but that it does not provide us with the true chronological sequence of creation nor do I believe the days of Genesis 1 were 24 hour days.