

An Apologia for the 24-Hour Day Creation View, Part 3

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I am convinced that the alternative accounts I summarized in my [last post](#) are wrong. Thus, despite the fact that I have benefited from other work done by proponents of these views and, for that matter, regard their work to be full of Christian integrity, I nevertheless find their arguments on these matters unconvincing. My purpose in the third and final part of this series is not to do a point-by-point rebuttal of the four alternate views that I presented in my last post for this has been done adequately by others (on theistic evolution, see Vern S. Poythress, “Response to Howard J. Van Till,” in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, pp. 236–39; on the gap theory, see Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled*, on the day-age and framework views, see Joseph A. Pipa, Jr. “From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* pp. 153–98; and on the framework, see my “Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Account,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, pp. 211–49). Rather, with my [first post](#) serving as a foundation, my objective is to present three areas of weakness and a questionable presupposition that each view shares.

(1) Hermeneutical inconsistency. If the narrative in the creation week is historical literature, then it should be interpreted according to the conventions of that genre—conventions that most evangelicals use when interpreting the remainder of the narrative in Genesis (for a good discussion of the genre of this account, see Steven W. Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1–2:3: What Means This Text,” in [Coming to Grips with Genesis](#), pp. 163–9). Though some want to interpret the creation account as something other than historical literature (e.g., poetry), the presence of distinctly narrative features calls such approaches into question.

Non-literal interpretations of the creation week minimize the historical details of the creation account. And, this is what we would expect if Genesis 1:1–2:3 were a poetic, or even a semi-poetic, account. However, this account has the characteristics of historical, narrative literature, rather than poetic literature. If this account were poetry, poetic parallelism would be its dominant feature, as it is in passages such as the creation hymn in Psalm 104. In contrast to the expected rhetorical features associated with poetry, Genesis 1:1–2:3 consistently uses a grammatical device that characterizes historical literature, the *waw* consecutive. This device occurs some 2,107 times in Genesis, averaging out to 42 times per chapter. In Genesis 1:1–2:3, while there is an absence of poetic parallelism, there are 55 *waw* consecutives (for more details about the use of *waw* consecutive in narrative literature, see my “Critique of the Framework Interpretation,” pp. 216–18). Whatever else may be said about the creation account, this grammatical device marks it as historical narrative, just as it does in the remainder of Genesis.

Additionally, if words such as “day,” “evening,” and “morning,” as well as the use of sequential numbering can be dismissed as simply figures, what is to prohibit other features in the text from being understood figuratively. Is God’s formation of Eve from Adam’s rib (Gen 2:21) a figure (as for example, framework advocate Henri Blocher suggests, *In the Beginning*, pp. 98–100)? Is the serpent in Genesis 3 only figurative? What about the tree of knowledge of good and evil or

the tree of life? Where will we draw a line, once we start down this path? Will Adam eventually be interpreted only as a figure, a model for humanity? My argument is that non-literal interpretations of the creation account unjustifiably and selectively minimize its historical and theological details, undercutting the historical and theological fabric of other portions of Genesis and Scripture.

(2) An inconsistency with the perspicuity of Scripture. The doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture maintains that the average believer can comprehend the Bible’s overall message. What this doctrine denies is that a believer needs assistance from an external interpreter, whether it be a Pope, philosophy or any other human authority, to arrive at a proper understanding of the Bible’s basic doctrines.

In Scripture, the literal understanding of the creation account is both assumed and used as the basis for other commands, such as the Sabbath command in Exodus 20:8–11 (see Todd S. Beall, “Contemporary Hermeneutical Approaches to Genesis 1–11,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis* p. 159). Furthermore, the literal interpretation is set forth and assumed throughout Jewish and Christian history (see J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall, “The 24-Hour View,” in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, pp. 47–52). In fact, it was not until the nineteenth century with the development of uniformitarian geology that the literal interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3 was even questioned, something which lead Pipa to remark, “What in Genesis 1 or the rest of scripture suggests a non-literal view? Did the church make such a gross error in almost 2000 years of interpretation” (“From Chaos to Cosmos,” p. 192)?

(3) Undermining the Fall of Adam and the Edenic Curse. Each of the alternative views directly affirms or allows for suffering and death before the fall of the head of the human race and, thus, undermines both the headship of Adam and the Edenic curse (though some framework advocates do not directly address the issue of when death entered the created order, framework advocate Henri Blocher does; see *In the Beginning*, pp. 184–85).

To grasp the significance of the fall of Adam and the Edenic curse in Genesis 3, we must understand the dominion mandate, represented in the first two chapters of Genesis. Having been made in the image of God, Adam was created by God, in Genesis 1:26, 28, to represent him as vice-regent over creation. An aspect of Adam’s role is spelled out as his *ruling* over the animal kingdom in v. 26 and again in v. 28. Adam’s kingship over the animals is further reflected by his assigning names to the animals that God brought before him (cf. 2:19; for a poetic recounting of the dominion mandate, see Ps 8:6–7). Another aspect of Adam’s dominion over creation is seen in 1:28, where Adam and Eve were to “subdue” the earth, and again in 2:5, 15, where man is to “work” (or, “cultivate”) and “keep” (or, “take care of”) the ground. Based upon the dominion mandate, we can see that two aspects of Adam’s dominion specifically included animals and the ground.

The account of the Fall in Genesis 3 records God’s announcement of judgment on the serpent, the ground, Adam and Eve. In addition, the dominion mandate in Genesis 1–2 would suggest that the Fall impacted the entire realm over which Adam reigned. The curse on the serpent in Genesis 3:14 certainly implies that the Fall affected more animals than the serpent: “Cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.” Based on the dominion mandate, when God judged his vice-regent, this judgment extended beyond Adam to the created realm over which God had given him authority. Not only does Moses imply that divine judgment had an effect on

Adam and the subjects of his dominion, but Paul also strongly suggests this in the New Testament. For example, the effects of the Fall are seen on Adam's family. In Romans 5:12–21, Paul maintains that Adam brought death and condemnation to all those in his family line, and by implication, his wife. Paul precisely states that humanity's death came by Adam: "sin entered...through one man, and death through sin" (Rom 5:12; see also 1 Tim 2:11–15). In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul again teaches that "by a man came death" (v. 21), and "in Adam all die" (v. 22). In Romans 8 Paul includes more than humanity in the Fall when he maintains, "the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it" (v. 20). The effects of the Edenic curse brought the creation under such bondage that Paul describes it as "bondage to corruption" (v. 21). Moreover, this curse is so pervasive that "the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (v. 22). Therefore, the effects of Adam's sin initiated death and destruction into the created realm.

Therefore, the fall of Adam involved a curse that not only brought corruption and death to humanity but it also resulted in the Edenic curse, a curse that affected all the created realm over which Adam had been appointed as ruler. The death and corruption of Romans 5 and 8 are connected to Adam and any cosmogony that allows for suffering and death before the fall of Adam is inconsistent with the teaching of Paul (see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*, p. 622).

(4) Presuppositions and biblical interpretation. As noted, the 24-hour day view has been the dominant view of Christian interpreters from the Church Fathers until Charles Lyell in the mid-1800s (see James Mook, "The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, pp. 23–51; and David Hall, "A Brief Overview of the Exegesis of Genesis 1–11: Luther to Lyell," pp. 53–78). What has primarily changed since Lyell's time is the way man defines and uses science. Modern scientific opinion has seemingly been elevated to the status of general revelation, and with its elevation "scientific opinion" has become an a priori that influences how we interpret Genesis 1:1–2:3.

For example, even the respected Hebraist Bruce Waltke, a framework advocate, seemingly reflects this presupposition: "The days of creation may also pose difficulties for a strict historical account. Contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the possibility of creation in one week, and we cannot summarily discount the evidence of the earth sciences. General revelation in creation, as well as the special revelation of Scripture is also the voice of God. We live in a 'universe,' and all truth speaks with one voice" (*Genesis*, p. 77). As I read the remarks of perhaps the greatest evangelical Old Testament scholar in my lifetime, whose books I use in most of my classes, his observations give me pause. Does it not sound like the "earth sciences," as interpreted by "contemporary scientists," communicates general revelation? If this is correct, does this not imply that the "general revelation" communicated by "contemporary scientists" is something other than *general* revelation since it was unavailable from the time of creation until the modern era. Further, this confuses general revelation with scientific opinion and implies that general revelation has the same propositional force as special revelation. It is the propositional revelation of Scripture (Ps 19:1–6, Eccl 3:11, Acts 14:17, 17:23–31, Rom 1:18–25, 2:14–15, 10:18) that defines general revelation. And, Scripture defines general revelation as a constant knowledge about God that is available to all men; it is, however, not *comprehensive* knowledge about God (e.g., it reveals no Gospel) or nature (e.g., it does not include accumulating scientific opinion; see Richard Mayhue, "Is Nature the 67th Book of the Bible," in *Coming to Grips with*

Genesis, pp. 111–15). Consequently, I am convinced that it is biblically inadequate to equate scientific opinion with general revelation.

Through the years I have heard and read statements similar to Waltke's and have often asked myself that, if we did not live in our current age, would this type of statement have been made and, furthermore, would any of the alternate interpretations of Genesis 1:1–2:3 even be valid options for evangelicals? It seems that the spirit of our age has created a modern mindset conducive to a reinterpretation of the creation account. However, many of the influences that shape such reinterpretations are external to Scripture, rather than being derived from a consistent biblical theology. In my estimation, there is no biblical reason to reinterpret Genesis 1:1–2:3.

Therefore, my conclusions are that theistic evolution, the gap theory, the day-age and framework views pose more exegetical and theological difficulties than they solve and that the traditional, literal reading provides the most consistent interpretation of the exegetical details associated with the context of the early chapters of Genesis and the overall theological message of Scripture. At the end of the day, therefore, I am convinced that the Westminster Confession of Faith is still correct: "In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good" (chapter 4, paragraph 1).