

How Long Were the Days of Creation?

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[0:00] The Day of Creation Alright, our study tonight, as you see from your notes, pertains to the days of creation.

! Answering this particular question, how long were they?! Now, is that an important question? Well, the answer is important.

It's an important question if it leads to the right answer. But the issue, I think it's very important.

There are a lot of things at stake. Obviously, any time you begin to attempt to interpret Scripture and to discover its meaning, and any time there is a question pointed at God's Word as to whether it means exactly what it says, or maybe it means something else, or it's symbolic of something else, or maybe we're not to take it literally, and so forth.

Any time we begin to approach God's Word with those kinds of questions, then there's a lot at stake. The very nature of Scripture. And our understanding of the nature of Scripture is at stake. And I'm going to say on the front end, and I'll probably end with this statement, that I think the best way is to, when you approach God's Word, I know, not think, I know the best way, is to just believe it for the way it says it.

[1:39] And you'll not go wrong. And we don't have to spend a lot of energy and engage in a lot of speculation about what it means if we will first approach it in that sense, that it means exactly what it says.

And it's right there on the face of it. In fact, there are a number of what are called hermeneutical rules. That is, hermeneutics just interprets how to interpret God's Word.

There are a number of rules that scholars follow, and rule number one is always what's the plain meaning? What does it plainly say? And we'll go with that. And my rule of thumb for God's Word is to take it literally where it clearly means to be literal.

So, when it is being symbolic or trying to convey some symbolism, then it clearly tells us that.

And so we don't have to be confused about that. Alright, let's go ahead and read the first several verses of Genesis 1.

[2:52] And I really think that I would like to read all the way through to the end of the chapter. It's okay to do that. It's good to have Scripture reading.

And it's an awesome chapter in God's Word. And you could not even conceive of trying to state the processes of creation in more concise terms than the way it is put to us right here in chapter 1.

I know I can't. If I were to attempt it, it would turn out to be about a 200, right now 215 page thing.

Alright. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void. And darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Then God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.

[4:00] And God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. So the evening and morning and the morning were the first day.

Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. Thus God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.

And it was so. And God said, God called the firmament heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. Then God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.

And it was so. I love that way the verse begins with God said, and then it ends with, And it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called seas.

And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself on the earth.
[5:14] And it was so. The earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. For the evening and the morning was the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens, to give light on the earth. And it was so. Then God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.

He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens, to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

So the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Then God said, Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth, across the face of the firmament of the heavens.

[6:17] So God created great sea creatures, and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Then God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature, according to its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beasts of the earth, and each according to its kind, and it was so.

And God made the beast of the earth, according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth, according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image.

[7:22] In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. Then God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth, every tree whose fruit yields seed, to you it shall be for food.

Also to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.

And it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Alright? Incredible. There it is. There's the creation. Everything. All described as happening in one verse of the Bible.

[8:29] And you know, the key, obviously the highlights of the chapter, we're going to kind of move through as we go along, but the highlight that just, I mean, that part, those parts of the chapter that stand out, ought to anyway, again, is that phrase, And God said, And it was so.

And it was good. And He capped it off with, with very good. Very good. So God's creation was absolutely perfect, in every respect.

And we think it's perfect now. We think this is beautiful now, but we cannot begin to imagine what His original creation was like before man sinned.

And not only brought sin upon Himself and all the generations after Him, but also brought the curse of sin upon the creation as well. So, there it is.

Now, we're going to deal tonight, if you've read ahead in your notes, with one of the most common questions pertaining to this particular portion of Scripture.

[9:42] I mean, there are a lot of questions related to this chapter. I mean, it's scrutinized. The creation story is one of the most scrutinized and, I would say, criticized accounts in the entire Bible.

But one of the questions that continues, persists, is this issue about how long were the days of creation?

Now, you can imagine, you know, the importance of the answer to that question. Well, let me back up a minute. You can, I think, imagine, or surmise what's behind the question.

What is the source of that question? Because if you can come up with an answer or prove the speculation that the days were not 24-hour days, then that, of course, opens the window for you to believe in not only an old earth, but also to believe in some form of evolution.

Because evolution requires time. A whole lot of time. In fact, the kind of evolution that is being propagated and taught today requires more time than there could possibly be, actually.

[11:07] But it requires time. And so, what better way for a, quote, for a, quote, Christian to appear to be scholarly or educated and embrace what seems to be the accepted science of the day and yet still, at the same time, be a devoted believer and believe the Bible?

What better way to have both those things than to try to prove that the days of creation were not literal days, but periods of time?

And so, it's a crucial question. It really is. Now, let me ask you, were the days of creation 24 hour, literal 24 hour days, 24 hours in duration, were they?

I see people shaking their heads, nearly all of you. Some of you, you know, looking a little bewildered and maybe, maybe you have a question about that or maybe you have, have come to some kind of conclusion about that.

And I hope, if it's a wrong one, I hope to change it here tonight. Either the days were 24 hour days just like they are today or the days mean something else.

[12:28] They were not literal days, but geological ages. Now, not everyone that embraces, you know, some figurative understanding of the word days puts it in terms like that, geological ages.

What in the world does that mean? Some might even hold to the idea that, no, they weren't 24 hour days, but they were unspecified periods of time. And the Bible is not trying to be literal at this point. It's just simply putting, you know, something that the mind cannot comprehend to put it in some kind of terms that we can get a hold of.

You know, whatever the argument might be. So, maybe unspecified periods of time or geological ages or whatever it might be. It's either the one or the other.

Alright? I happen to believe that it is the one. That is exactly the way the Bible reads. And we have no authority, by the way.

[13:32] We can just say this right on the front. We have no authority other than our own speculation or some inferences that we might glean from Scripture that really are kind of willy-nilly and not provable.

we have no reason to believe that when the Bible says they were days that they weren't just simply that. 24-hour periods.

Now, I would say that the answer to whether or not they're 24-hour days or unspecified periods of time, the answer hinges on the understanding of the word day itself.

And that's where we need to start. Now, we could propose some other arguments. I'm not going to do that tonight, but there are some other arguments related to this question of how long were the days.

But the crucial one is what does the word mean? When the Bible writer, and I believe it was Moses, Moses I believe wrote the first five books of the Bible.

[14:41] When the Bible writer, when Moses wrote this account out as it was given to him by the Holy Spirit, we don't know how he came by this other than, in this case anyway, some kind of divine dictation.

I mean, it was just revealed to him. When he put it down on paper or whatever material he used, why did he use the word day?

And what did he mean by it? Alright, so there's the crucial question. Now, the word translated day, and I think I've given you in your notes just about all of my notes, so it may seem at times that I'm just reading it, and it seems that way because I am just reading it.

The word translated day in the Hebrew language or in the English text is the Hebrew word yom, and I've given that to you. Yom is the word. It's not the only word in the Hebrew language as we're going to see a little bit later, that could refer to day or days.

We'll get to that in a minute. But the word here is yom. In fact, it's repeated over and over and over. The word yom appears in chapter 1, I mean multiple, multiple times.

[15 : 58] And you could identify that right there in the English text because every time yom appears in the Hebrew text, the English translators bring that in using the English word day.

Alright? And that's a right thing to do because that's what the word means. It means day. And in fact, as I've already mentioned, there is almost a redundancy.

I mean, this would be, you know, in our day and in certain contexts, would not be good writing. I have to watch that when I'm writing to not repeat words over and over.

To be redundant in that sense. But Moses is being very redundant. Do you think that the Holy Spirit knew that we would have this big hang up about the days of creation?

I think he knew that and so he then inspired Moses to use the word over and over and over again. And how many times does it have to appear for us to get it?

[17 : 07] And so it's redundant, but I think for a reason. Now Moses used the Hebrew word yom in combination with numbers throughout the text, which is significant.

It's important to note that in our understanding of what he meant by the word day or yom. He used it in conjunction with numbers like first day, second day, third day, fourth day, and so forth.

Is that important? Yes, it is. Because when a word, the word day or yom is used in connection with numeric words that signify numbers, then it always means a 24 hour period of time.

A natural cycle of night and day. It means the day, a 24 hour period of time. He also, and this is key, used the word in conjunction with the phrase the evening and the morning.

And when it is used that way, it always refers to a 24 hour day. So I think it's very clear. So throughout the Bible, as a matter of fact, whether used in these two ways as Moses did, or where the word just simply stands alone.

[18 : 33] I think there may be one or two exceptions. I don't recall what they are. I didn't write them in my notes. But the vast majority of times that it's used in Scripture, it always means what?

A 24 hour day. Just exactly the way we use it today. Now we can, by the way, and we might as well admit it, we sometimes use the word day to mean something other than a 24 hour period, don't we? Every dog has his day. That might be a split moment of time, or might be an unspecified period of time, so we can. There is some vagueness in the word day in regard to the way it's used.

But the way Moses used it here in chapter 1, it means simply a 24 hour period of time. Now as I mentioned a while ago, there are some words that Moses could have used if he wanted to convey some other idea, or put forward the idea of longer periods of time.

If he wanted to be very clear about that, he could have used kadam. I have these listed. See how many there are? Kadam, which means ancient time.

[19 : 45] And if Moses had combined that word with yom, then the idea would have been from days of old. That's how it would have been translated in the English text if he had used kadam with yom.

There's alam, everlasting time. Dar, we'll get to dar a little bit later as well. That means an age of time, or generation.

It's used in that way. Tamid means an unlimited time. orek, I'm not sure about the pronunciation of that one. That sounds like a vacuum cleaner.

Combined with yom, that word means length of days. Shana, revolution of time, typically used to refer to a year.

Netsach, forever. Could have used that word there, though that would not have fit at all. Moed, seasons.

[20 : 47] A season of time. Now Moses could have used, maybe not any of those words, because these are all the words in the Hebrew language that refer to passages of time.

But many of those he could have used if he had wanted to convey the idea that the days of creation were not literal 24 hour days, but unspecified periods of time.

But he didn't, did he? He didn't use those words, he used yom, which, as I have said, refers to a 24 hour day nearly every time it appears in Scripture.

Now if Moses had wanted to tell us that the creation events took place over long periods of time, he could have done the simple thing of using the plural of yom.

Now that would have been simple. Yomim means days. I mean, if Moses wanted to really communicate literally what God revealed to him about the creation, Moses wasn't there when that

took place, so all this was full revelation to Moses.

[22:02] If he had wanted to be true to the revelation, if God had said, by the way, or meant to say that the days of creation took periods of time, then he would have used the plural.

But in no time in the entire chapter did he use the plural of yom. If you combined, by the way, combined the plural, if he used the plural and combined it with the evening and the morning, then the idea would have been translated in our Bibles this way, days of evening and morning, the first days.

Now that would have made a big difference, right? I mean, that's a whole different thing. than to say the morning and the evening, the first day. First day, that means a day.

That means what God did, as described in Scripture, on the first day, he did it in one day. And if he had meant a period of time, then he would have used days.

He would have days used days. Alright, so let's think about this. and this kind of in regard to or connected with the idea of evolution. If God had wanted to tell us that the creation started in the past, sometime in the past, but continued, which is what the theistic evolutionist believes, if that's what he wanted to communicate, if that's the truth, then he would have communicated it that way so that we'd understand, and there were several ways that Moses could have said that.

[23:40] I mentioned the Hebrew word dar a while ago and if you used that either alone, it could have just been used alone, or with the word yamim, that's the plural of yam or days, or if he'd used dar with evening and morning, then the meaning would have been generations of days and nights.

That's pretty clear. And if we'd had that in our Bibles, then we would then understand that by whatever process, God created all things over a long period of time.

Now, it still doesn't necessarily give you the right to believe in some evolutionary process or some naturalistic creation or evolution.

creation. That doesn't give you a right to do that, but at least we could say that, yeah, this earth is billions of years old, and it took God apparently millions of years to create it.

If he had wanted to convey that idea, he had easy ways to do that in the Hebrew language, and the fact that he didn't ought to tell us something. Ought to tell us that we ought to just believe the way the Bible puts it, that the days were 24-hour days.

[25:03] Also, there are Hebrew words and combinations, I haven't provided the words here for you, but combinations of words that Moses could have selected if he had wanted to speak of a creation process that took periods of time.

Words like perpetual, forever and ever, to this age, and onward. There are Hebrew words that would convey that idea.

Continuation of days, these are words that appear in the Hebrew Bible or other places and clearly convey that idea in its context, but he didn't do that.

Moses could have used another word in conjunction with yom, and it's the word rab, rab, at least I think that's how it's pronounced.

It means long. He could have used that word and so then each day of creation would have been described as a long day or a long season.

[26:12] He had some of those long days. You wish they'd get over real quick. If God through his writer Moses had wanted to convey these ideas, he had all kinds of ways to do it.

And he didn't do it. Instead, he just simply used the word day. And if he did that, that's what he meant. Now, there are some passages in the Bible, a couple of them.

There are more than two, but I have given you a couple there that help us in our consideration of this question concerning the days of creation.

Exodus chapter 20 and verse 11 tells us, I believe, at least one of the reasons why God took six days to create everything.

And there are a number of reasons we could speculate as to why he picked that number of days. Of course, I think it can be proven that we're not going to do it tonight, delve into it tonight, that seven is a number that appears in the Bible and conveys the idea of perfection.

[27:30] And so, the seven days, you know, six days of creation and the seventh day of rest conveys that idea. And there's some other considerations, but Exodus chapter 20 gives us an idea.

And it says there, and you'll remember this commandment, where he says, and remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.

In it you shall do no work, you nor your son nor your daughter nor your male servant nor your female servant nor your cattle nor your stranger who is within your gates in six days.

Here's a clear statement. This is God speaking. I think God speaking throughout scripture, that's what God's word is, it's God spoke and it was written down.

But you know, someone might argue, well that's what Moses wrote over there in Genesis chapter 1 and he just didn't get things quite right. But here we have God speaking. And he said, in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth.

[28:42] How many days? Six days. The sea and all that is in them and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

That's a very clear statement about the six days of creation. Now, God certainly did not create everything in six million years.

Or he would have said that. He said days. But carry this out in your thinking. He didn't create everything in six million years and then rest for another million years and then command all of us to do the same thing.

Wouldn't that be something? Well, a lot of work. A lot of work. Six million years, I think I might need a million years to rest.

I don't know. But let's just be reasonable, just logical. If days means longer periods of time, then what does it mean there in Exodus 20?

[29:48] You say, well, you know, words mean different things in different places and different contexts, but there's no indication that Moses, when he wrote in chapter 1 of Genesis, and then as he recorded what God said in Exodus chapter 20, there's no indication that there was the desire to convey some other idea.

You know, when you take words out of Scripture or try to analyze, rather, discover the meanings of words that appear in the text, you consider the context. Because, yeah, when the context changes or other features of the text enter into it, then the words in their usage change.

And that's why it's very important that preachers and students of God's Word consider not just the bare definition of words, but the context, how they're used, and in what sense, and so forth.

Because meanings change. But there's no indication in those two passages, none whatsoever, that the context of things has any kind of effect on the meaning of the word.

So, day means day in Genesis 1, means day in Exodus chapter 20. It's the same idea in both places. We might also consider 2 Peter 3.8.

[31:15] And someone might say, well, this is poor salesmanship, because this is the very text that those who hold to a lengthy time period for the days, this is the very text, a proof text they always go to, or typically go to, and 2 Peter 3.8 says, with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

That's a very interesting statement. And the passage, of course, is often used as the case, to make the case, for the days of creation being long periods of time, but that won't work.

And why won't it work? Well, in the first place, and this is very important to consider. You might think this is not all that important, but it is. In the first place, 2 Peter 2.8, or 3.8, is not a definition of the word day.

Peter's not writing a dictionary there. He's writing a letter to some believers. And so when he used the word day, he's not trying to teach them the meaning of the word day.

You understand what I'm saying? Because the definition for day already existed. And Peter chose the word day because he already knew what it meant.

[32:38] And it meant a 24-hour period of time. That's what it meant before Peter wrote. That's what it meant when his readers read the letter. And that's what it means still today. Day means day.

So he's not attempting to give us a definition for the word day. day. In the first place, if you're going to be consistent, and you've got to be consistent in your interpretation of Scripture, especially at this point, if this meant that we would have to put a thousand years for the days in Genesis 1, then we would have to do the same thing everywhere else the word appears.

Unless, of course, the context rules. And informs us as to what the meaning of the word day is in that particular text. If that's not there, then we have to then assume that everywhere the word day appears, it could mean a thousand years.

Or an unspecified amount of time. In fact, that's the idea there in Peter's text. Right? So, how long was Jesus in the grave?

Three thousand years. Three thousand years. Well, I mean, if you're going to use the logic, you know, and use 2 Peter 3.8 as the basis for your argument, then you've got to do the same thing everywhere else.

[34 : 10] This is a different issue altogether, but I was speaking with a Jehovah's witness not very long ago. We had, as a matter of fact, several conversations and our last one was not very pretty.

In fact, he did something quite unusual. As a matter of fact, sometime later on that day, and we don't know when, he slipped a little note in the door and apologized for being ugly.

But we got on the subject, of course, of John 1. John 1.1, which says, in the beginning God, or in the beginning was God, and the Word was God.

And, of course, in their translation of the Bible, it reads, and the Word was a God. And I was trying to explain to him something that he did not know and had not been taught, obviously.

And that is that in the Greek text, there is no indefinite article. There is no a. It has to be supplied based upon interpretive skills.

[35 : 23] The word God there does not mean a God. It means the God. Now, if you're going to argue that, no, it means a God.

Because there's no the in front of it in the Greek text. And that's their argument. It's called anarthros. It's anarthros theos. I mean, there's no definite article.

No the in front of God there. So that's why they translated a God. This is what they say. The problem is, the word God appears six other times in the chapter without the definite article.

But they don't put an A in front of it there. Because it doesn't suit their theologies. Now, that's the same idea here. If you're going to make an interpretive decision that in this one place the word day actually means a thousand years or a specific amount of time, then barring any information from context, you've got to do the same every other place that it appears.

And of course, they don't do that at all. Let's carry this out a little bit further. In the second place, where's my note?

[36 : 47] Okay. Oh, here it is. And also, to be consistent, find my place in my notes here. Got off on this tangent here, Jehovah's Witnesses.

Same concept, okay? And by the way, you can add another argument there. If they meant a God, then that means there's more than one God.

Okay, but anyway. Whenever we find the word a thousand years, and that disappears in Scripture, and we're going to just follow this same logic, then we should replace it with the word day.

or at least we have the right to or freedom to if we want to. It could mean that. I mean, if we're going to carry this logic out, and of course that would distort quite a number of passages in the Bible.

For one, the passage that speaks to the millennium, the day-long reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, to wrap this up, I've got a novel idea, and this is how I began tonight.

[38 : 00] Let's just believe the Bible. I should believe it, and not worry about trying to reconcile what we might view as unscientific, try to reconcile the Holy Scripture with the all-knowing scientists of our day.

Let's not try to do that. And let's just take the Bible for what it plainly says, how it plainly reads, and what it clearly says. And so, with that, just kind of bring it to a synopsis of where we are, kind of putting it in a nutshell where we are in Genesis.

Genesis 1.1 is a declaration of the who and what of creation. That's what Genesis 1.1 is. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

It's a declaration. That's all it is to it. It's not to try to convey here's what he did first and then something happened and had to do it again.

It's just simply a declaration. Don't try to read anything else into it. It's a declaration of the who and what of creation. In the beginning, God created everything.

[39 : 10] Everything. Genesis 1.2 is a statement concerning the process of creation. The earth was without form. That is, it was not created to the point where it could sustain living things and so forth.

The earth was without form and void and the Spirit of God hovered, brooded over the face of the waters. By the way, I believe that's a reference to the Holy Spirit.

I believe all members of the Godhead were involved in the creation. When God said, that's the Lord Jesus, the Word. Alright, so in the beginning, God, that's God the Father, the Spirit brooded on the face of the earth, and God said, there's all three members of the Godhead right there.

So Genesis 1.2 is the process. There's no mention of any gap of billions of years, so don't try to read that into the text. We may get to heaven and find out that indeed there was. But I think we're on very sure ground when we just say, this doesn't say that, so I don't believe that. There's no chaos mentioned and so forth.

[40 : 23] Then verse 3, from verse 3 on to the end of the chapter, God is speaking. He speaks, and all things are created, and it's all very good.

And He did it in six literal 24-hour days, and on the seventh day, what did He do? Because He was tired? No, but because He was finished.

He was finished. Alright, that's it. Amen. Thank you.