

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

THEOLOGY PROPER

The Doctrine of God

UNIT 8: THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

Lesson 26

The Six Days of Creation

Affirming the Biblical Account of God's Creative Work

Key Texts: Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20:8–11; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49

And God Saw That It Was Good

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Series Verse
<i>“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?”</i>
Romans 11:33–34, NASB 1995

Introduction

No portion of the Scriptures has been more contested in the modern period, more reinterpreted in the name of scientific accommodation, and more consequential in its downstream theological effects than the opening chapters of Genesis. The question of how to read Genesis 1 and 2, and specifically the question of whether the six days of creation are six literal, sequential, twenty-four-hour days, is not merely an intramural debate among biblical scholars about a point of ancient cosmology. It is a question that touches the authority and perspicuity of Scripture, the coherence of the gospel, the integrity of the biblical account of sin and redemption, and the trustworthiness of the God who inspired the text.

This lesson takes a position that is both exegetically grounded and confessionally rooted: the days of Genesis 1 are literal, sequential, twenty-four-hour days; the creation account is historical narrative, not literary framework or poetic metaphor; God created the heavens and the earth and all living things in six days and rested on the seventh; Adam and Eve were specially and immediately created by God as the first human beings; and the earth is young, not ancient, because the genealogies and chronology of Scripture, taken at face value, yield a creation date some thousands of years in the past, not millions or billions.

This position is not taken out of ignorance of the scientific data or the alternative interpretive proposals; it is taken with full awareness of them and with the conviction that the exegetical evidence of Scripture and the theological coherence of the gospel together demand it. We will engage the alternative views fairly and substantively, noting where their proponents raise genuine questions, but we will ultimately conclude that they require the interpreter to impose on the text of Genesis meaning that the text itself, in its grammatical, literary, and canonical context, does not support. The word of God is our authority, and the natural reading of that Word, guided by the grammatical-historical method and confirmed by the New Testament's own use of Genesis, is that God created in six literal days.

I. The Exegetical Case for Six Literal Days

A. The Hebrew Word *yom* with an Ordinal Number

The primary unit of time in Genesis 1 is the Hebrew word *yom*, translated “day.” This word is the center of the interpretive debate: does *yom* in Genesis 1 refer to a literal twenty-four-hour day, or to an indefinitely long period of time, or to something else entirely? The answer begins with a careful examination of the usage of *yom* in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, *yom* is used in several ways: to refer to daylight as opposed to night (Genesis 1:5a); to refer to a twenty-four-hour day; and occasionally to refer to an indefinite period of time (as in “the day of the Lord” or “in that day”). The crucial grammatical observation is this: whenever *yom* appears with an ordinal number (first, second, third, etc.) or a cardinal number in the Old Testament outside of Genesis 1, it invariably refers to a literal twenty-four-hour day. The construction “the first day,” “the

second day,” “the third day” and so on is found 359 times in the Old Testament outside of Genesis 1, and in every single instance it refers to a literal day. The use of numbered days in Genesis 1, “there was evening and there was morning, one day— provides the strongest possible grammatical signal that literal days are intended.

This is not a minority exegetical judgment; it is the overwhelming consensus of Old Testament scholars across the full spectrum of theological positions, including many who do not share the young-earth creationist position. The grammatical evidence for literal days in Genesis 1 is not seriously contested; what is contested is whether the grammatical evidence should be overridden by other considerations.

B. The Evening-Morning Formula

The repeated refrain of Genesis 1, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” (Genesis 1:5, NASB 1995); “there was evening and there was morning, a second day” (Genesis 1:8); and so on through the sixth day, is the second major piece of exegetical evidence for literal twenty-four-hour days. The evening-morning formula is the standard Hebrew way of describing the two halves of the ordinary day, the period of darkness followed by the period of light that together constitute a single twenty-four-hour cycle. The formula is not poetic or figurative; it is the ordinary Hebrew expression for a day and a night.

Moreover, the evening-morning formula appears in exactly this form, “there was evening and there was morning”, only in Genesis 1 in the entire Old Testament. Everywhere else in the Old Testament where the formula “evening and morning” appears, it refers without exception to a literal day. There is no lexical or grammatical basis for reading the formula in Genesis 1 as anything other than what it means everywhere else it appears.

C. The Exodus 20 Pattern

The most decisive piece of evidence for the literal interpretation of the six creation days is found not in Genesis itself but in Exodus 20:8–11, the fourth commandment: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (NASB 1995).

The argument of the fourth commandment is explicit and unmistakable: the six-day human work week followed by a seventh day of rest is grounded in and patterned after God’s own six-day creation followed by rest on the seventh. The Sabbath commandment is not merely analogically related to the creation week; it is directly derived from it. The human work week consists of six literal days plus one literal day of rest; the creation week, by the explicit parallel drawn in Exodus 20:11, must therefore also consist of six literal days plus one literal day of rest. To read the creation days as long ages while reading the work week as literal days is to break the grammatical and theological connection that Exodus 20:11 explicitly forges.

This argument is not peripheral; it is the argument built into the text of Scripture by the divine Author Himself. God does not say “for in a very long period God made the heavens

and the earth.” He says “in six days.” The same God who inspired Genesis 1 inspired Exodus 20:11, and He intends us to understand that the six days of creation are the same kind of days as the six days of the human work week.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

Exodus 20:8–11, NASB 1995

II. Surveying and Evaluating the Alternative Views

Several alternative interpretations of Genesis 1 have been proposed within the broadly Christian theological tradition, most of them motivated at least in part by the desire to accommodate the claims of modern geology and evolutionary biology. We will examine each view fairly, noting its appeal and its proponents, before identifying the exegetical and theological reasons why it is found wanting.

View	Core Claim	Primary Objection
Day-Age Theory	Each “day” of Genesis 1 represents an indefinitely long geological epoch, corresponding to the vast ages of geological and cosmological time. Associated with Hugh Ross and the Reasons to Believe ministry.	Violates the grammatical evidence: yom with an ordinal number and the evening-morning formula always mean a literal day. Breaks the Exodus 20:11 parallel. Makes death and suffering pre-Adamic, contradicting Romans 5:12.
Framework Hypothesis	Genesis 1 is literary framework or topical arrangement, not chronological narrative. The six days are a literary device grouping creation acts thematically (days 1–3 as realms, days 4–6 as rulers). Associated with Meredith Kline and Henri Blocher.	Imposes a literary structure the text itself does not indicate. The evening-morning formula signals real sequence. The Exodus 20:11 parallel requires a real temporal sequence, not a literary arrangement.
Gap Theory	A vast gap of time separates Genesis 1:1 (original creation) and Genesis 1:2 (a chaos resulting from Satan’s fall), with the six days describing a re-creation. Associated with G.H. Pember and C.I. Scofield.	No grammatical basis exists for a gap between verses 1 and 2. The conjunction waw in verse 2 is sequential or circumstantial, not adversative. The theory is an exegetical novelty without patristic or Reformational support.
Theistic Evolution	God used the process of Darwinian evolution over billions of years as His means of creating	Requires re-reading Genesis 1–2 as non-historical. Destroys the historical Adam essential to

	all living things, including human beings. Adam and Eve are either symbolic, or the first hominids to receive the divine image. Associated with BioLogos and various evangelical scholars.	Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15. Makes death and suffering pre-Adamic and part of God’s good design, undermining the gospel’s diagnosis of the human condition.
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A. The Day-Age Theory

The Day-Age Theory holds that the “days” of Genesis 1 are not twenty-four-hour days but indefinitely long geological epochs corresponding to the vast ages posited by modern geology and cosmology. The theory typically appeals to 2 Peter 3:8 (“with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day”, NASB 1995) and Psalm 90:4 to support the claim that “day” in Genesis 1 might mean something far longer than twenty-four hours.

The exegetical problems are substantial. First, 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4 are not making a claim about the meaning of *yom* in Genesis 1; they are making a point about God’s relationship to time, that His experience of time differs from ours. They cannot be used to redefine the meaning of *yom* in a specific grammatical context where every other indicator points to a literal day. Second, the Day-Age Theory cannot account for the Exodus 20:11 parallel, which grounds the literal human work week in the creation week. If the creation days were geological epochs of millions of years, the fourth commandment’s appeal to them as the pattern for a six-day work week would be nonsensical. Third, the Day-Age Theory requires the existence of death, suffering, and predation before the fall of Adam, because the geological record it accepts is a record of death, which contradicts the biblical teaching that death entered the world through Adam’s sin (Romans 5:12).

B. The Framework Hypothesis

The Framework Hypothesis, developed in the twentieth century by scholars including Arie Noordtjij, Meredith Kline, and Henri Blocher, holds that Genesis 1 is not a sequential chronological account but a literary framework that organizes the creation acts into a topical arrangement: days 1–3 describe the creation of the three realms (light/darkness, sky/sea, land/vegetation), and days 4–6 describe the creation of the rulers of those realms (luminaries, birds/fish, land animals/man). On this view, the six-day structure is a literary device, not a temporal sequence, and no inferences about the length of creation or the age of the earth can be drawn from it.

The Framework Hypothesis is more sophisticated than the Day-Age Theory, and it correctly identifies genuine literary artistry in Genesis 1. But it ultimately fails on several grounds. The evening-morning formula, repeated six times, is not a literary device signaling topical arrangement; it is the standard Hebrew expression for a literal day, and its presence signals genuine temporal sequence. The Exodus 20:11 parallel, once again, is devastating: the fourth commandment grounds the literal, sequential six-day work week in God’s own creative work, a connection that can only be meaningful if God’s creative work was itself a literal, sequential six days. And the claim that Genesis 1 is a non-

sequential literary arrangement cannot explain why the account follows the exact logical and biological order of actual creation (light before vegetation, vegetation before animals, animals before man) rather than the thematic ordering the Framework requires.

C. The Gap Theory

The Gap Theory, associated especially with the Scofield Reference Bible and the dispensationalist tradition of the early twentieth century, proposes that Genesis 1:1 describes an original, perfect creation; that a gap of vast, indeterminate time separates verse 1 from verse 2; that during this gap Satan fell and brought chaos and destruction to the earth; and that Genesis 1:2 onward describes a re-creation or restoration of the ruined earth. The theory was appealing to an earlier generation of Bible believers who wanted to affirm both the inspiration of Genesis and the geological evidence for an ancient earth.

The Gap Theory rests on an exegetically insupportable reading of Genesis 1:1–2. The Hebrew construction of verse 2 does not require or even naturally suggest a gap between the two verses. The word traditionally translated “was” (*hayetah*) is a standard past tense form; it does not imply that the earth “became” chaotic (as Gap theorists sometimes render it). The conjunction *waw* that begins verse 2 most naturally functions as a circumstantial clause describing the condition of the earth at the moment of the beginning described in verse 1, not as a marker of subsequent events following a temporal gap. The Gap Theory is an exegetical novelty without support in the history of biblical interpretation prior to the nineteenth century.

D. Theistic Evolution

Theistic evolution is the position, advocated by organizations such as BioLogos and by a growing number of evangelical scholars, that God used the process of Darwinian evolution over billions of years as His means of creating all living things, including human beings. On this view, Genesis 1 and 2 are either broadly symbolic, or they describe God’s creative activity in a way that must be reconciled with the standard scientific account of the history of life on earth. Adam and Eve, on many theistic evolution accounts, are either symbolic figures, or the first hominids to receive the divine image in a population of evolving proto-humans.

Theistic evolution is the most theologically consequential of all the alternative positions, precisely because it requires not merely a reinterpretation of the days of Genesis 1 but a thoroughgoing reconception of the biblical account of human origins. If Adam and Eve did not exist as the special, immediate creations of God described in Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22, if they were evolved hominids who emerged from a population of prehuman ancestors, then the entire biblical-theological framework built on the historical Adam collapses. We will address this in Section V; the point here is that theistic evolution requires the interpreter to treat Genesis 1 and 2 as something other than historical narrative, and the grammatical-historical exegetical evidence gives us no warrant to do so.

III. The Age of the Earth: A Young-Earth Perspective

A. The Genealogical and Chronological Evidence of Scripture

The question of the age of the earth cannot be separated from the question of how to read the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. These genealogies provide a chronological framework that, when taken at face value, yields a date of creation some thousands of years in the past. The genealogy of Genesis 5 traces the line from Adam to Noah with specific ages given for each patriarch at the birth of his son, and specific ages at death. The genealogy of Genesis 11 traces the line from Shem (the son of Noah) to Abraham with the same format. When the numbers are added up and the chronology of the patriarchs and the monarchies of Israel and Judah is taken into account, the biblical evidence points to a creation date in the range of 6,000 to perhaps 10,000 years ago, with the narrower end of that range more defensible on the current state of the evidence.

The standard objection to this chronological reading is that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 may be selective, that is, that they may skip generations in the same way that Matthew 1 skips generations in the genealogy of Christ. This is a legitimate observation: it is well established that ancient Near Eastern genealogies, including biblical genealogies, were sometimes telescoped for literary or theological purposes. However, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 differ from telescoped genealogies in a crucial respect: they provide not merely a list of names but specific numerical data, the age of each patriarch at the birth of his son and his total lifespan. This numerical specificity serves a chronological function that telescoped genealogies do not have, and it argues against the view that these genealogies can be stretched to accommodate vast additional ages.

B. The Testimony of the New Testament

The New Testament's own reading of the Genesis record is consistently historical and consistently literal. Jesus refers to Adam and Eve as historical persons and to their creation as occurring "from the beginning of creation" (Mark 10:6, NASB 1995), a phrase that is most naturally understood as placing the creation of human beings at the beginning of the creation week, not billions of years after the beginning of the universe. Luke's genealogy of Christ traces His lineage back through "the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38, NASB 1995), treating Adam as a historical individual on the same footing as all the other historical individuals in the genealogy.

Paul's arguments in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 depend absolutely on the historical reality of Adam as the first human being through whom sin and death entered the world (to be treated at length in Section V). And Jude 14 refers to Enoch as "the seventh generation from Adam" (NASB 1995), treating the Genesis 5 genealogy as providing genuine generational count from a historical Adam. The New Testament's consistent treatment of the Genesis creation account as historical narrative, with real persons and real events, is a powerful argument for reading Genesis 1 and 2 in the same way.

C. The Question of Apparent Age

A common question raised against young-earth creationism is the question of apparent age: how can the universe appear to be billions of years old if it was created only thousands of years ago? The young-earth response is the doctrine of mature creation, also called the Omphalos principle after Philip Gosse's 1857 work. The argument is that

God created the world with the appearance of age, just as Adam was created as a mature adult rather than as an infant, just as the wine Jesus created at Cana was mature wine rather than grape juice, so the entire created order was created with the appearance of maturity and age that would be consistent with its function.

This is not a scientifically verifiable claim, it is a theological claim about the nature of divine creation. God who can create a mature adult from dust (Genesis 2:7) can create a mature universe from nothing. The appearance of great age in the geological record and the cosmological data is not a deception but the natural consequence of a creation that was created complete and functional from the beginning. We hold this position not because we have resolved all the scientific questions but because we trust the inspired testimony of the God who was there.

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

Genesis 1:31, NASB 1995

IV. The Special Creation of Adam and Eve

A. The Formation of Adam

The creation of Adam is described in Genesis 2:7 with a particularity and an intimacy that sets it apart from the creation of the rest of the animate world: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (NASB 1995). Three elements of this description are theologically significant and must be held together.

First, man was formed from the dust of the ground, the same material as the rest of the created order. This establishes the creaturely continuity of human beings with the rest of creation: Adam is not a spiritual being accidentally encased in matter but a genuinely material creature whose physical nature is inseparable from his full humanity. The dust of the ground from which he was formed is no different from the dust of the ground that covers the creation. Human beings are creatures, not divine.

Second, God Himself formed Adam, this is a direct, immediate, personal creative act. The Hebrew verb *yatsar*, “to form,” is the word used of a potter working clay. It is not the language of gradual biological process; it is the language of personal, purposeful, immediate craftsmanship. God did not set in motion a process that eventually produced Adam; He personally formed Adam from the dust, as a potter forms a vessel from clay.

Third, God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (nephesh *chayyah*). The divine inbreathing is what distinguishes Adam from the rest of the creation. While all living creatures are called nephesh *chayyah* (living creatures) in Genesis 1, the description of God personally breathing into Adam’s nostrils emphasizes the special intimacy and directness of the divine life-giving act in the creation of the human being.

B. The Formation of Eve

The creation of Eve is described in Genesis 2:21–22 with equal particularity: “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man” (NASB 1995). The creation of Eve from Adam’s rib is the biblical ground for two foundational truths about human sexuality and marriage.

First, the unity of the human race: Eve is created from Adam, establishing that all humanity shares a common origin and a common nature. Paul draws on this truth in Acts 17:26: “He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth” (NASB 1995). The unity of the human race in Adam is the theological ground of the universality of the fall (Romans 5:12) and the universality of the redemption offered in Christ (Romans 5:18–19).

Second, the complementarity of male and female: Eve is created as Adam’s “helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18, NASB 1995), a complement and counterpart, equal in dignity as an image-bearer of God, distinct in her femininity as the one who corresponds to and completes the male. Jesus’ teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:4–6 grounds the permanence and exclusivity of the marriage covenant in the creation of male and female as the foundational human distinction: “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (NASB 1995).

The creation of Eve from Adam’s rib is not a primitive myth to be demythologized; it is the historical account of the creation of the first woman, upon which the entire biblical theology of marriage, sexuality, and human unity depends. To abandon the historicity of this account is to saw off the branch on which the entire biblical ethic of marriage and sexuality rests.

V. The Historicity of Adam and the Coherence of the Gospel

A. The Biblical-Theological Necessity of the Historical Adam

Of all the theological implications of the historical creation account, none is more consequential for the coherence of the Christian gospel than the historicity of Adam. The apostle Paul builds two of the most architecturally central arguments of New Testament theology, the doctrine of original sin and the doctrine of the resurrection, on the bedrock of a historical Adam who was the first human being and through whose real, historical act of disobedience sin and death entered the world.

Romans 5:12–21 is the locus classicus: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—” (NASB 1995). The argument of Romans 5:12–21 rests on a structural parallel between two historical persons: Adam, the first man through whose one act of disobedience condemnation and death came to all; and Jesus Christ, the second man through whose one act of obedience justification and life come to all who are in Him. The parallel is explicit: “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made

sinner, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19, NASB 1995).

The logic of Paul’s argument requires that Adam be as historical as Christ. If Adam is a symbolic figure, if his “fall” is a myth or a literary device representing the universal human experience of moral failure, then the argument of Romans 5 collapses. Paul is not making an argument about universally experienced human tendencies; he is making an argument about the federal representative headship of two historical individuals, the first of whom brought death and the second of whom brings life. Deny the historicity of the first Adam, and you undermine the logic of the second Adam.

B. 1 Corinthians 15 and the Last Adam

The same structural logic appears in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul’s great chapter on the resurrection: “For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21–22, NASB 1995). The argument requires two things: first, that death came into the world through a specific historical man named Adam; and second, that resurrection and life come through a specific historical man named Jesus Christ. The two are exactly parallel. If Adam’s death-bringing is historical, Christ’s life-giving is historical; if Adam’s is mythical, the argument provides no ground for insisting that Christ’s is historical.

Paul explicitly identifies Christ as the “last Adam” and the “second man” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47, NASB 1995), terminology that presupposes a first Adam and a first man. The entire framework of 1 Corinthians 15, and of the Christian hope of bodily resurrection, is built on the structural parallel between two historical human beings. This is not an incidental feature of Paul’s argument that can be removed without damage to the rest; it is the load-bearing theological architecture of his exposition of the resurrection.

C. The Gospel Requires a Historical Fall

Beyond the specific Pauline texts, the coherence of the gospel as a whole requires a historical fall of a historical first human being. The gospel, in its most basic structure, is the announcement that something has gone wrong with humanity, catastrophically, universally, and in a way that human beings cannot fix by their own efforts, and that God has provided in Jesus Christ the remedy for what has gone wrong. What went wrong is specified: sin entered the world through one man’s disobedience (Romans 5:12), and with sin came death, estrangement from God, guilt, corruption, and the subjection of the entire creation to futility (Romans 8:20).

If the fall is not a historical event, if Adam’s disobedience is a myth representing the universal human tendency to sin, then there is no specific, datable, reversible event that Christ’s redemptive work reverses. Theistic evolution, by denying a historical first couple and a historical fall, transforms the gospel from the announcement of a divine remedy for a historical catastrophe into a spiritual program for managing the natural condition of an evolving species. This is not the gospel of the New Testament. The gospel requires a historical Adam, a historical fall, and a historical redemption in Jesus Christ that reverses what the first Adam did.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned... For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:12, 19, NASB 1995

VI. The Goodness of the Original Creation

The six-day creation account concludes with a comprehensive divine evaluation of everything that God had made: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31, NASB 1995). This declaration of the goodness of the original creation is not incidental; it is a theologically fundamental affirmation that shapes the entire subsequent narrative of Scripture.

The original creation was very good in a comprehensive, unreserved sense. There was no death among the creatures, death is introduced by Adam’s sin (Romans 5:12; Romans 8:20–22) and is not part of God’s original design. There was no predation as we now know it, the creation mandate of Genesis 1:29–30 assigns plants as food for both humans and animals, implying a pre-fall world without animal killing. There was no suffering, no disease, no groaning. The creation was exactly what its Maker intended: very good, very whole, very beautiful, completely fit for the purpose for which it was made.

This affirmation of the goodness of the original creation has multiple important implications. It establishes that the material world is not inherently evil or deficient, refuting every form of Gnostic or Platonic dualism that treats matter as the source of evil. It establishes that the corruption and suffering and death we observe in the world are not God’s original design but the consequence of sin, establishing the moral and theological reality of the fall as a genuine historical disruption of a genuinely good original order. And it grounds the Christian hope in the restoration of that original goodness, not merely the escape of spiritual souls from the material world, but the renovation and glorification of the entire creation: “Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5, NASB 1995).

The world we inhabit, beautiful, broken, groaning, waiting, is not the world God made. It is the world that sin has made of what God made. And the God who declared the original creation very good has promised to restore it to a goodness that surpasses even the original: a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13), in which there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Revelation 21:4), in which the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). The declaration of Genesis 1:31 is not merely a past verdict; it is a preview of the final verdict that God will pronounce over His restored creation at the consummation of all things.

VII. The Pastoral and Doxological Significance

A. The Trustworthiness of Scripture

The most fundamental pastoral implication of this lesson is the trustworthiness of the Word of God. If Genesis 1 and 2 can be read as something other than historical narrative, if the days are not days, if Adam is not Adam, if the fall is not a fall, then the principle of interpretation that has been applied to Genesis can be applied to any portion of Scripture where the natural reading conflicts with prevailing scientific or cultural consensus. The interpreter who is willing to reread Genesis in light of modern geology will find it increasingly difficult to resist the pressure to reread other portions of Scripture in light of modern psychology, modern sociology, or modern sexual ethics.

The young-earth creationist position is not held out of obscurantism or ignorance of the scientific data. It is held out of the conviction that Scripture is the Word of God, that the God who inspired it cannot lie, and that the natural, grammatical, historical reading of Scripture, the reading that the church held for the first eighteen centuries of its history without serious dissent, is the reading that honors the God who gave us His Word. We take Genesis at face value not because we are naive but because we are persuaded that God means what He says.

B. The Dignity of Human Beings

The doctrine of the special creation of Adam and Eve has immediate and profound implications for the dignity of human beings. If man evolved from lower forms of animal life, then the image of God in which he is made (Genesis 1:26–27) is at best a late arrival, a quality that emerged from a biological process rather than being directly conferred by a special divine act. If man was specially created by God who formed him from the dust, breathed into him the breath of life, and made him in His own image, then his dignity is not the product of a biological process but the gift of a direct divine intention. Every human being, regardless of age, ability, race, or condition, is the image-bearer of the God who formed our first parents from the dust and declared the result very good.

C. For Every Season of Life

For the new believer: You may be encountering the doctrine of six-day creation for the first time and finding it in tension with what you learned in school or university. That tension is real and should be taken seriously. But consider this: the question is not merely what the evidence seems to say but who you trust to interpret it. The God who cannot lie has told us how He made the world. The scientists who construct alternative models are not omniscient and are not neutral. Begin with the Word of God, read it carefully, and let it be the lens through which you evaluate everything else.

For the long-tenured saint: The doctrine of the goodness of the original creation is a truth that has profound implications for how you relate to the suffering and corruption of the present world. The groaning you hear, in the world around you, in your own body, in the community you serve, is not the world as God made it. It is the world as sin has made it. But the God who declared the first creation very good has promised a new creation more glorious still. Let that hope sustain you through the groanings of the present age.

For the doubter: The question of creation chronology is one on which sincere and godly Christians have disagreed. But the question of whether Adam was a historical person is not one on which the gospel can afford ambiguity. If you are struggling with this question,

I encourage you to read Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20–49 carefully and prayerfully, asking yourself: can Paul’s argument stand if Adam is not historical? The answer, honestly faced, is no. And that is a powerful argument for taking the historical reading of Genesis seriously.

For the one in the cultural crossfire: Many Christians today face pressure, in the academy, in the workplace, and sometimes in the church, to accommodate the creation account to the standard scientific narrative. This pressure is real and should not be dismissed. But the accommodation always comes at a theological cost, and the cost is usually higher than the accommodators expect. Hold the Word of God firmly and graciously. Know the exegetical arguments. Engage the questions honestly. And remember that the God who spoke the world into being in six days is more than capable of sustaining your faith in a world that does not believe Him.

Key Texts: *Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20:8–11; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49; Genesis 1:31*

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Yom	The Hebrew word for “day” in Genesis 1. When used with an ordinal number (first, second, third) or with the evening-morning formula in the Old Testament, yom invariably refers to a literal twenty-four-hour day. This grammatical pattern, consistent across the 359 occurrences of yom with an ordinal outside Genesis 1, is the primary exegetical evidence for the literal interpretation of the six creation days.
Evening-Morning Formula	The repeated refrain in Genesis 1, “there was evening and there was morning, the [n]th day”, that marks the conclusion of each creation day. In Hebrew usage, this formula is the standard expression for a twenty-four-hour day (the period of darkness followed by the period of light). Its use six times in Genesis 1 provides strong grammatical evidence for a literal, sequential six-day creation.
Day-Age Theory	The interpretive view that the “days” of Genesis 1 represent indefinitely long geological epochs rather than twenty-four-hour days, allowing the creation account to be harmonized with the standard geological and cosmological timescale. Associated with Hugh Ross and Reasons to Believe. Rejected by this series on exegetical grounds (the yom + ordinal pattern, the Exodus 20:11 parallel) and on theological grounds (pre-Adamic death contradicts Romans 5:12).
Framework Hypothesis	The interpretive view that Genesis 1 is a literary framework or topical arrangement rather than a sequential chronological account. Days 1–3 are seen as parallel to days 4–6 (realms and their rulers), with the six-day structure serving as a literary device rather than a temporal sequence. Associated with Arie Noordtjij, Meredith Kline, and Henri Blocher. Rejected on the grounds that the evening-morning formula signals real sequence and the Exodus 20:11 parallel requires a real temporal correspondence.
Gap Theory	The interpretive view that a vast, indeterminate period of time separates Genesis 1:1 (original creation) and Genesis 1:2 (a chaos brought about by Satan’s fall), with the six days of Genesis 1 describing a subsequent re-creation. Associated with G.H. Pember and the Scofield Reference Bible. Rejected on exegetical grounds: no grammatical basis exists for a gap between verses 1 and 2, and the theory lacks patristic or Reformational support.
Theistic Evolution	The view that God used the process of Darwinian evolution over billions of years as His means of creating all living things, including human beings. Genesis 1–2 is read as non-historical narrative (literary, symbolic, or functional). Rejected in this series on both exegetical grounds (Genesis 1–2 is historical narrative) and

	theological grounds (a non-historical Adam destroys the framework of Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20–49).
Young-Earth Creationism	The view that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal, sequential twenty-four-hour days some thousands of years ago (typically estimated at 6,000–10,000 years based on biblical genealogies and chronology), and that the geological and cosmological evidence for an old universe reflects either the effects of the flood, the apparent age of a mature creation, or both. The position held in this series as the most exegetically faithful and theologically coherent reading of the biblical data.
Mature Creation	Also called the Omphalos principle. The theological position that God created the world with the appearance of age, just as He created Adam as a mature adult rather than an infant, so that the universe and the earth were created with the structural features that correspond to mature, fully functional systems even though they were newly created. Offered as an explanation of why the universe appears older than the biblical chronology indicates.
Federal Headship	The theological doctrine that Adam acted as the representative head of all humanity in the garden, so that his sin and its consequences are counted to all who are in him by natural descent. The basis of the doctrine of original sin and the foundational premise of the Adam-Christ parallel in Romans 5:12–21. Requires a historical Adam as the first human being and federal representative of the race.
Original Sin	The doctrine that Adam’s first sin resulted in the corruption of human nature and the imputation of guilt to all his descendants, so that all human beings are born in a state of moral corruption and under divine condemnation apart from the grace of God in Christ. Grounded in Romans 5:12–21. Requires a historical fall of a historical Adam as its foundation; if Adam is non-historical, the doctrine of original sin has no anchor.
Nephesh Chayyah	Hebrew: “living creature” or “living being.” The phrase used in Genesis 1 for the animate creatures God created and in Genesis 2:7 for the human being who became a living creature when God breathed the breath of life into him. While the term itself is applied to both animals and humans in Genesis, the description of God personally breathing into Adam’s nostrils (Genesis 2:7) distinguishes the creation of the human being from the creation of other animate creatures.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: What Must We Believe?

We must believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days, that Adam and Eve were specially and immediately created as the first human beings, and that the fall of Adam was a real historical event with real historical consequences for all of his descendants. These are not peripheral beliefs; they are the theological foundation on which the entire biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation rests. To abandon any one of them is not a minor accommodation to scientific consensus; it is a structural alteration to the building that the whole of Scripture is constructing.

We must also believe the goodness of the original creation, that the world God made was not the world of death, suffering, and groaning that we now inhabit, but a world declared very good by its Maker; and that the redemption Christ accomplished is not merely the rescue of spiritual souls from a material world that was always corrupt, but the restoration and glorification of a material creation that was very good and will be very good again.

B. For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?

Let the creation account rekindle your sense of the glory and the tragedy of the human condition. The glory: we are made in the image of God, specially formed by His own hands, breathed into by His own breath, and declared very good on the day of our creation. The tragedy: the same Adam who bore that image fell, and his fall has touched every one of his descendants with the corruption of sin, the reality of death, and the estrangement from God that the gospel alone can reverse. The gospel is not good news in a vacuum; it is good news against the backdrop of a catastrophe, and the catastrophe requires a historical fall to be a real catastrophe rather than a myth.

Desire the hope that the creation account, rightly understood, provides: a hope not merely for the salvation of souls but for the restoration of the whole creation. The groaning of Romans 8:19–22 is not the groaning of a world that was always broken; it is the groaning of a world that was made very good and has been subjected to futility because of sin, awaiting the liberation that will come when the sons of God are revealed at the coming of Christ.

C. For the Hands: What Must We Do?

- Read Genesis 1 and 2 carefully and repeatedly. Do not let the cultural pressure to reinterpret these chapters prevent you from hearing what they actually say. Read them as the author intended them to be read: as historical narrative, with real persons, real events, and real theological consequences. The text is not obscure; it is clear. The difficulty is not in understanding it but in receiving it.
- Know the exegetical arguments for the literal days. Understand the significance of yom with an ordinal number. Know the evening-morning formula and what it means in every other occurrence in the Old Testament. Know the Exodus 20:8–11 argument and be able to explain why it is decisive. These are not arcane scholarly points; they are the biblical evidence that any literate reader of Scripture can grasp and apply.

- Understand and be able to explain the theological necessity of the historical Adam. Know Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20–49. Be able to explain why these texts require a historical Adam and why the elimination of the historical Adam destroys the logic of Paul’s argument. This is not a secondary question; it is the question on which the coherence of the gospel depends.
- Engage the cultural pressure with grace and firmness. When colleagues, students, or neighbors press you on the question of creation, do not retreat into defensiveness or dismissiveness. Engage the questions honestly. Acknowledge what we do not know. Hold firmly to what the Word of God says. And be prepared to show why the stakes are higher than a simple question about geological age.
- Let the goodness of the original creation shape your hope for the new creation. The world God is making is not a different kind of world from the one He made; it is the restoration and glorification of the world He made, purged of sin and death and groaning, and filled with the fullness of His presence. That hope is rooted in the goodness of the original creation, and it should shape the way you live now, in eager expectation of the day when all things will be made very good again.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. Where do you land personally on the question of creation chronology, six literal days, long ages, or somewhere in between? What has most shaped your view: the biblical text, the scientific evidence, the theological implications, or some combination? Share briefly and honestly with the group.

Observation Questions (What Does the Text Say?)

2. Read Genesis 1:1–5, paying close attention to verse 5. What are the two components of the first “day”? How does the evening-morning formula function here? What does the use of an ordinal number (“one day”) suggest about the kind of day being described?

3. Read Exodus 20:8–11. What is the explicit connection drawn between the human work week and the creation week? How does the phrase “for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth” function in the argument of the fourth commandment? What does this connection imply about how the creation days should be understood?

4. Read Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22. What specific details are given about the creation of Adam? About the creation of Eve? What do these details tell us about the manner and the meaning of the creation of human beings?

5. Read Romans 5:12–21. Identify every instance in which Paul refers to “one man” or “the one man.” What is the structural logic of Paul’s argument? How does the argument depend on the historical reality of both Adam and Christ?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

6. Explain the three main pieces of exegetical evidence for literal twenty-four-hour days in Genesis 1: the yom + ordinal pattern, the evening-morning formula, and the Exodus 20:11 parallel. Which do you find most compelling, and why?

7. Survey the four alternative views (Day-Age, Framework Hypothesis, Gap Theory, Theistic Evolution) and explain the primary theological objection to each. Which of these views, in your estimation, poses the most serious theological danger, and why?

8. The lesson argues that the historicity of Adam is essential to the coherence of the gospel. Trace that argument carefully. What specifically would be lost from the doctrine of original sin, the Adam-Christ parallel of Romans 5, and the resurrection hope of 1 Corinthians 15 if Adam is not historical?

9. What does Genesis 1:31 (“behold, it was very good”) tell us about the original creation? How does the declaration of the goodness of the original creation bear on the question of pre-Adamic death and suffering? And how does it ground the Christian hope for the new creation?

10. How do you evaluate the “mature creation” argument for reconciling the appearance of an old universe with a young-earth chronology? Is this a satisfying

theological response to the scientific evidence, or does it raise additional questions? How should Christians hold this question?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- 11.** The lesson argues that the willingness to reinterpret Genesis in light of scientific consensus sets a precedent for reinterpreting other portions of Scripture in light of cultural consensus. Do you find this argument persuasive? Can you think of historical examples where this trajectory has played out? What safeguards does the church need against this kind of interpretive drift?
- 12.** If a young person in your congregation came to you troubled by the apparent conflict between what they learned in Genesis and what they are learning in a biology or geology class, how would you respond? What would you want them to understand about the relationship between Scripture and science, about the limits of each, and about the specific theological stakes of the creation question?
- 13.** The creation of man in God's image (Genesis 1:26–27) and the special formation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:7, 21–22) are the biblical basis for human dignity. How does this doctrine bear on contemporary questions about the value of human life at its earliest and latest stages, about the meaning of gender and sexuality, and about the obligations we have toward other human beings?
- 14.** Read Romans 8:19–22 together as a group. How does the groaning of creation described here connect with the very good creation described in Genesis 1:31? What does this passage tell us about the scope of Christ's redemption? And how does it shape the way you think about caring for the created world in the present age?

Prayer Focus

Open your time of prayer by reading Genesis 1:26–31 together, the creation of human beings in the image of God and the divine declaration that everything was very good. Let the contrast between that original goodness and the world we now inhabit press upon you with its full weight: the grief of living in a creation subjected to futility, and the hope of a God who has not abandoned what He declared very good.

Pray with gratitude for the dignity of the human beings made in God's image: those in your family, your congregation, your community, and the broader human family. Pray for the grace to treat every human being, regardless of age, ability, or condition, with the honor due to those who bear the image of their Creator. And pray with hope for the restoration of the creation: that the God who said "behold, it was very good" at the beginning will say "behold, I am making all things new" at the end (Revelation 21:5, NASB 1995), and that your life now would be shaped by that coming reality.

Close with the words of Psalm 8:1, 3–5: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth... When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty" (NASB 1995). The God who created all things and who crowned humanity with glory and majesty is the God who is restoring all things in Christ. That is the ground of our worship, our hope, and our mission.

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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