

Toward Understanding the Biblical Creation Day
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Abstract: This paper is written for Bible believing Christians. It presents two powerful reasons, based on a sound exegesis of scripture, why the Creation day must be understood as an ordinary day. The first is based on Gen. 1:3-5 and is very easy to grasp. The second comes from Exodus 12 to 20 and is a little more complex but very powerful.

Introduction:

Exegesis requires a careful, systematic study to discover the original, intended meaning of the text. This means we have to think backward in time and this places considerable limitations on modern interpretations. Moses knew nothing about relativity, quantum mechanics, or black holes nor did his first readers. The good word is that we don't need to either. We are just trying to learn what God told Moses. This text should not to be allegorized or decontextualized and it should never be interpreted to mean what it never meant before.

We are interested in Truth, and Truth is an absolute. It never changes (Jn 8:32,44; 14:6; 18:37) What is ultimately at stake in the search for Truth is the right to claim knowledge. We seek the knowledge that God wants us to have about His Creation.

Part 1 Genesis 1:3-5

(3) Then God said, "Let there be light", and there was light.

(4) And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

(5) And God called the light day(Yom), and the darkness He call night (Leylah).

And there was evening and there was morning, one day. NASV

These are the words God gave to us. God saw the light He had created and called it good. "Separate" is a key word. What does it mean? It appears that the light was good but something else needed "fixing". In the Hebrew text, the word "separate" (*badal*) has the special form of a hiphil verb. In simple terms, it is causative. This means God caused something to happen which separated the light from the darkness.

To understand what actually happened, examine verse 5. It says God called the separated light, day, or daytime. And, He called the separated darkness, night, or nighttime. This means He separated the daytime from the nighttime. Moses, using Egyptian astronomy, may have explained it by the rising and the setting of the sun. Today, we explain it by saying God caused the earth to rotate. The words "*separated the light from the darkness*" work in either case.

Finally, daytime and nighttime were joined together into a unit called “*one day*”, a 24 hour creation day. This just what we do in English. The word for “one” in verse 5 is the same as that used in Gen. 2:24 where God joined Adam and Eve into one, a unit called a married couple. Compare this with Ex. 26:6,11 where units are also formed.

Logic is linear and our understanding of Gen 1:3-5 necessarily propagates forward into the rest of Genesis. If we misunderstand it, then this error may corrupt our understanding of all that follows. Thus any long day or day-age view necessarily introduces eisegesis or some modern hermeneutical approach. Thus if we don't accept the 24 hour exegesis, you probably aren't exegeting the text properly.

Many well meaning people want to bring peace between Christians and expect to find it in a compromise on the creation day. But God doesn't expect peace at this time. Matthew 10:34, he says, “*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*” Of this verse, Dr. McGee says, “This is a verse with which the pacifist has had difficulty. Until all unrighteousness is put down and suppressed, the person of Christ will cause the enmity of Satan and a battle will ensue.” The long creation day is a compromise which provides the Naturalist room to work his deeds.

Part 2 Exodus 12-20

Another very powerful Biblical argument for the twenty four hour Creation Day is found in Exodus. It can be abbreviated but I prefer to start with Exodus 12:2 “*This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.*” This verse is not appreciated by most Christians, so it is necessary to digress a bit to provide necessary background information.

The Hebrews had been slaves to the Egyptians for 430 years(Ex.12:41). As slaves, they had little freedom and followed many customs of their overlords. The Egyptians had a twelve month calendar, each month with 30 days, and a five day festival at the end of the year. They worshipped Ra, the sun god, and many other gods during their festivals. It is easy to speculate that God got fed up with these pagan gods and now Israel needed to have its own calendar. Verse 12:2 calls for a radical reform leading to a the lunar calendar still in use today by all Jews. (Other verses in Exodus help define this calendar. See the appendix for a partial derivation. The complete derivation is postponed.)

From this point on we can count calendar days. About 56 usages of the word, day, (Yom), appear in singular and plural forms, but none refer to long periods of time. All the new festivals including the Hebrew Sabbath can be placed on this calendar. In fact, the very first Sabbath day(Shabbot) is found in Ex 16:23. (This is not the same word as God's rest(shavot) found in Genesis 2:1-3.)

We come to Exodus 20:8-11.

(8) *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

(9) *Six days you shall labor and do all your work,*

(10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

(11) 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.

We pause to emphasize that this is the fourth of the Ten Commandments and one of the most sacred parts of God's Law. It was given to Moses on top of Mount Sinai. Since God wants us to understand the Law, there should be no confusion over what it means. It is short. It is simple. It is clearly written and the word day (yom) appears in six places, twice in the plural. These are all underlined above. Day-Agers want to interpret the plural yom in verse 11 as a long period of time. But this is not possible here because we have established the clear meaning of the word, *yom*, in this passage as a calendar day. The rule for exegesis is that the meaning of a word is determined by its NEAR context. Clearly, yom in this passage, refers to an ordinary day.

Conclusions These two arguments should put to rest any idea that the Creation Day was a long period of time. And the reader who disagrees can not simply say, "I don't believe it." and walk away. He has two choices. He must either accept the exegesis as shown. He can not just skip over to another verse or point to some other supposed problem. He must face the arguments presented here. He cannot appeal to some other authority or try to redefine the terms. Or if he takes issue with the exegesis shown, he must justify his position carefully.

I think the above discussion provides a rigorous justification for the 24 hour creation day.

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APPENDIX

The purpose of this appendix is to derive a calendar for the first three months of the Egyptian Exodus. The key verse is Exodus 12:2. It contains a considerable amount of calendrical information but it is helpful to use a little lunar astronomy as well. It tells us God is giving the Hebrews a new calendar which differs from the solar calendar of Egypt. This calendar is based on lunar cycles rather than the sun and represents a radical reform, particularly with respect to the celebration of festivals. The Hebrew word, *hodesh*, which occurs three times in this verse, refers to either a new moon or a lunar month. New months are signaled by the visual observation of a new moon which occur on the average of 29.53059 days. Thus a month has either 30 or 29 days alternately. Since new moons are observed in the evening, new months and new days start at sunset. The first month of the year is called Nisan (March, April) and has 30 days, the second month, Iyar, has 29 days and Sivan has 30 days.

We cannot put in the days for Nisan because we do not know the day of the week for Nisan 1. However, Exodus 16:1 shows that Israel arrived at the Wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of Iyar and Exodus 16:22,23 shows that Iyar 22 was a Sabbath day. With this information we can fill in all 29 days of Iyar. Then working backwards, the 30 days of Nisan and finally the 30 days of Sivan are added. This completes the first three months of the calendar.

NISAN							IYAR							SIVAN						
Sun	Mon	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3							1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	29	30					

Much of the rest of this calendar can also be developed from Scripture, but the process becomes more complex and is deferred until another time. Note that 12 months comes to 354 days. The final result is actually a lunar-solar calendar which matches the Gregorian very closely.

In order to determine significant dates on this calendar, proceed to Exodus 19:1,2 which places Israel at Sinai on Sivan 1. Careful reading of Exodus 19:1-11 gives the following important information.

Sivan 1 The people camp before Mount Sinai.	vs 1 - 2
Sivan 2 Moses goes up the Mountain and God reconfirms the covenant.	vs 3 - 6
Sivan 3 The people accept the covenant	vs 7 - 8a
Sivan 4 Moses told to consecrate the people today	vs 8b - 10
Sivan 5 And tomorrow, the second day	vs 10
Sivan 6 Be ready for the third day. The Law is given.	vs 11ff

Note the following dates on this calendar:

1. The lamb was set aside on Saturday, the 10th of Nisan (Ex. 12:3)
2. The paschal lamb was killed at twilight on Wednesday, the 14th of Nisan.(Ex. 12:6)
3. Lamb eaten on first Day of Unleavened Bread, Thursday the 15 of Nisan.(Ex. 12:8-11)

4. The Law was given 50 days later, i.e. on Pentecost, a Friday.
5. The first manna fell on 16 Iyar and the first Sabbath was on 22 Iyar.

In determining dates for Hebrew events, our different culture easily trips us up. It is very important to note that on the Egyptian solar calendar, the day starts at sunrise, on the Hebrew lunar-solar calendar, the day starts at sunset and on our modern solar calendar, the day starts at midnight. When Moses talks about twilight in Exodus 12:6 that was the end of the 14th of Nisan. The lamb was eaten on the 15th.

It can be shown that this calendar is the same as that used during the crucifixion.