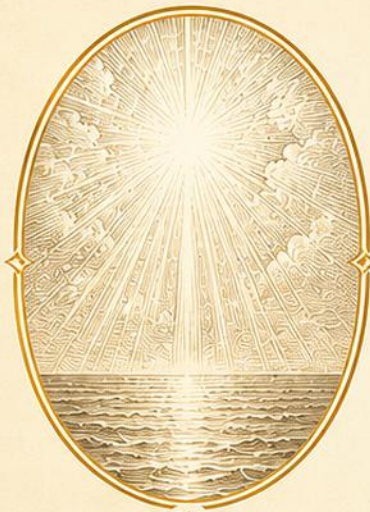


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SIX LITERAL DAYS?

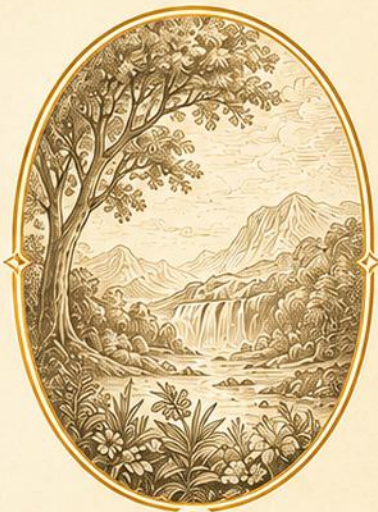
What Does “Day” Actually Mean in Genesis 1?



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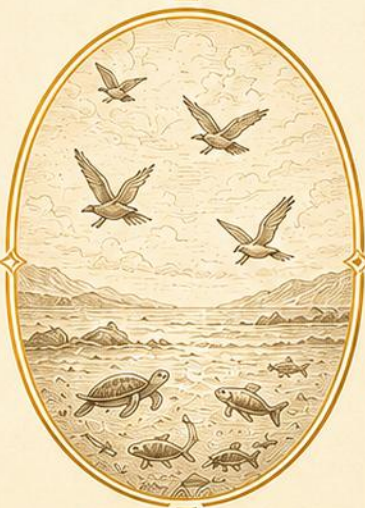
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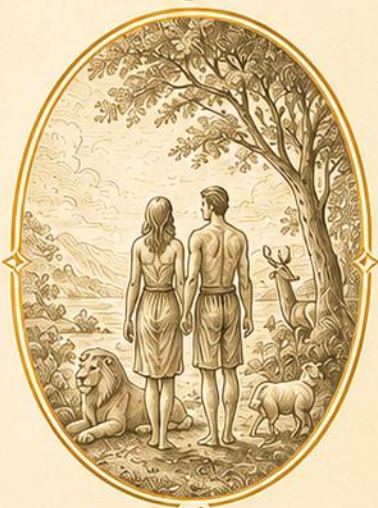
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— GENESIS 1:5 KJV —

“And the evening and the morning were the first day.”

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

www.ReasonTogether.Church

Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

SIX LITERAL DAYS?

What Does the Word 'Day' Actually Mean in Genesis 1?

GENESIS 1:5

“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Reason Together Church

www.ReasonTogether.Church

Bring your questions. Open your Bible. Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Aloha, and welcome to Reason Together Church.

To those who are here with us today,
and to those who are joining us online,
we are thankful that God has brought us together.

If this is your first time with us,
we want you to know that questions are welcome here.

You do not have to pretend that you understand everything.

You do not have to hide a question because someone else may think it is too simple.

And you do not have to be afraid that an honest examination will weaken the Word of God.

God is not frightened by our questions.

His truth is not threatened when we look closely at the words He chose.

So bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Before we begin, let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of opening Your Word.

You spoke light into darkness.

You formed the heavens and the earth.

You made us in Your image.

And You have not left us without truth.

Give us wisdom as we examine the words of Genesis.

Protect us from forcing the Bible to say what we want it to say.

Protect us from treating our traditions as though they were inspired.

Protect us also from surrendering clear Scripture merely because the world finds it difficult.

Teach us to be confident where Your Word is clear,

careful where interpretation is required,

and humble where You have not revealed every detail.

Most of all, help us see Jesus Christ,

the eternal Word, through whom all things were made.

We ask these things in His name.

Amen.

Before we enter our study,

I want to recognize our honored guests.
Whether you are visiting from another church,
visiting Oahu, or simply trying to understand what you believe,
we are glad you are here.
We are not here to compete with another Bible-believing church.
If you have a home church,
love it, serve it,
pray for it, and give there faithfully.
At Reason Together Church, we do not pass a plate.
There is a giving box in the back for members who are led to give.
Guests are never expected to give.
God loves a cheerful giver,
not a pressured one.
And when the study is finished,
we invite you to continue the conversation at the Reason Together Cafe.
The coffee is free, and so are the refills on conversations.
Today's question sounds simple.
But it has divided churches,
families, schools,
scientists, pastors,
and Bible teachers.
Did God create the world in six literal days?
Or, to ask the question more carefully,
what does the word day actually mean in Genesis chapter 1?
Someone will say, "The Bible says six days.
That settles it."
Someone else will say,
"The Hebrew word for day can mean a long period.
That settles it."
But both statements move too quickly.
The Hebrew word can have more than one meaning.
That is true.

The creation account also numbers the days,
joins them with evening and morning,
and connects them to the Sabbath.
That is also true.
Our responsibility is not to choose the fact we prefer.
Our responsibility is to examine all the evidence Scripture gives us.
Then there is the question hiding in plain sight.
Genesis records evening and morning on Day One.
It records evening and morning on Day Two.
It records evening and morning on Day Three.
But the sun, moon,
and stars do not appear until Day Four.
How could there be morning and evening before there was a sun?
That is not an unbeliever's question.
That question comes directly from reading the text.
Let us begin with Genesis chapter 1,
verses 1 through 5.
"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
"And the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."
"And God said, Let there be light:
and there was light."
"And God saw the light,
that it was good:
and God divided the light from the darkness."
"And God called the light Day,
and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first day."
Notice what the passage does not say.
It does not say, "The sun produced the first light."
It says, "God said,

Let there be light."

The source of the command is God.

The existence of light depends upon God.

The division between light and darkness is established by God.

Then God gives names to what He has divided.

He calls the light Day.

He calls the darkness Night.

And already, in that one verse,

the English word day is doing more than one job.

First, Day means the lighted portion in contrast with Night.

Then the verse says that evening and morning were the first day.

There, day describes the complete unit being counted.

The same verse should make us careful.

Words do not always carry precisely the same sense every time they appear.

We understand that in ordinary conversation.

Suppose I say, "I worked during the day."

I probably mean the daylight hours.

If I say, "I worked for three days,"

I probably mean three complete calendar days,

not merely three periods of daylight.

If I say, "In my father's day,"

I am not talking about one Tuesday.

I am describing a period of history.

If I say, "One day I will visit Australia,"

I may not have placed anything on the calendar.

If I say, "The day of the wedding has arrived,"

I am speaking of a particular occasion.

The English word day can mean daylight,

a calendar day, an occasion,

or a longer period.

We do not become confused because context normally tells us which meaning is intended.

The same principle applies to Hebrew.

The Hebrew word translated day is yom.

We will pronounce it simply as "yome."

Yom can refer to daylight.

Yom can refer to an ordinary day.

Yom can identify a particular occasion.

Yom can be used for a broader time.

Yom can appear in expressions such as the day of battle,
the day of trouble, or the day of the LORD.

So it is not accurate to say that yom always means exactly 24 hours.

The Bible itself will not allow us to say that.

But there is another mistake we must avoid.

Because a word can have several meanings,
we cannot choose whichever meaning helps our theory.

A word's range tells us what it can mean.

Its context tells us what it most likely does mean.

Think about the word bank.

It can mean the financial institution where you deposit money.

It can mean the side of a river.

If I tell you that I sat on the bank and watched the water,
you would not imagine that I brought a folding chair into a savings and loan.

The dictionary provides possibilities.

The sentence selects the meaning.

That principle is essential in Genesis 1.

We must not ask only,

"Can yom describe a long period?"

It can.

We must ask, "What does yom mean in this construction,
in this sequence, in this chapter,
and in connection with the rest of Scripture?"

Genesis 2:4 gives us an important broader use.

It says,

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created,

in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."

"In the day" summarizes the work of creation.

It does not refer only to Day One,

Day Two, or one isolated 24-hour period.

It means something like,

"when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."

That proves that yom can be broader than an ordinary day.

We should say that honestly.

But Genesis 2:4 does not use the same construction as the numbered days in Genesis 1.

It does not say, "the first day,"

"the second day,"

or, "the third day."

It uses a common expression that summarizes a time of action.

The difference matters.

Grammar matters.

Sequence matters.

Context matters.

Now look again at Genesis 1:5.

The Hebrew behind "the first day" is more literally,

"day one."

The word echad means one.

The account begins with day one.

Then comes a second day,

a third day, a fourth day,

a fifth day, and the sixth day.

These days are not floating symbols without order.

They are counted.

They follow one another.

Each day contains particular acts of God.

And after each of the first six days,

the account repeats a familiar boundary.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day."

"And the evening and the morning were the second day."

"And the evening and the morning were the third day."

The Hebrew word for evening is erev.

The Hebrew word for morning is boqer.

The word for night is laylah.

We do not need to become Hebrew scholars to understand the point.

Genesis is giving us light and darkness,
evening and morning, number and sequence.

Does the phrase evening and morning contain the words "24 hours"?

No.

We should not pretend that it does.

But does the repeated phrase sound more naturally like ordinary days than like unnamed geological ages?

Yes.

Especially when the days are numbered one after another.

One piece of evidence may not settle every question.

But evidence accumulates.

The word yom has a broad range.

The numbered sequence narrows that range.

Evening and morning narrow it further.

The workweek pattern gives us still more context.

Turn to Exodus chapter 20.

God is giving Israel the Ten Commandments.

Verses 8 through 11 say,

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

"Six days shalt thou labour,
and do all thy work:"

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God:
in it thou shalt not do any work."

Then God explains the pattern.

"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that in them is,

and rested the seventh day:

wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day,
and hallowed it."

Israel is told to work six days and rest one day.

Why?

Because God's creation week provides the pattern.

Six days of work.

One day of rest.

The human week is patterned after the creation week.

Exodus 31 repeats the connection.

Verse 17 says, "for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth,
and on the seventh day he rested,
and was refreshed."

God did not become physically exhausted.

He did not need to recover His strength.

The language tells us that His creative work ceased.

It was complete.

And His pattern became the pattern for His people.

This does not mean every aspect of God's work is identical to human labor.

God creates by His word.

We do not.

God's power is unlimited.

Ours is not.

But the comparison between the two weeks is deliberate.

That is one of the strongest reasons ordinary days remain the most natural reading.

Now we return to the sun.

If the sun was not made until Day Four,
how could the first three days be ordinary days?

Genesis gives us a distinction that is easy to miss in English.

On Day One, the Hebrew word is *or*.

It means light.

God says, "Let there be light."

On Day Four, the word is me'orot.

It refers to luminaries, light-bearers,
or lights in the expanse.

Genesis 1:14 says, "And God said,

Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night;
and let them be for signs,
and for seasons, and for days,
and years."

Verse 16 says, "And 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."

Day One gives us light.

Day Four gives us the appointed heavenly light-bearers.

The Bible does not name the sun and moon in this passage.

It calls them the greater light and the lesser light.

That may have helped Israel understand that the sun and moon were not gods.

The nations worshiped the sun.

The nations worshiped the moon.

Genesis places both of them under the command of the one true God.

They do not create.

They are created.

They do not rule God.

God assigns them their rule.

They are not eternal powers.

They are servants placed in God's ordered creation.

The sun is the normal marker by which we now measure a solar day.

But the sun is not the creator of time.

The clock on your wall measures time.

It does not manufacture time.

The mile marker beside the highway measures distance.

It does not create the road.

The sun marks days, seasons,
and years.

Genesis explicitly assigns it that function.

But the marker is not greater than the God who established the reality it marks.

If God established light and darkness,

and if God established their ordered alternation,

then God did not need the sun's permission to call the first period Day One.

Some interpreters propose that the sun already existed but became visible or was functionally appointed on Day Four.

They point to the Hebrew word *asah*,

translated "made,"

and distinguish it from *bara*,

translated "created."

That interpretation is possible to discuss.

But we should not overstate the distinction.

The words can overlap in descriptions of God's creative work.

Genesis does not plainly say,

"The sun had already existed for three days but clouds cleared on Day Four."

That is an interpretation added to explain the sequence.

The straightforward reading presents the luminaries in their appointed places on Day Four.

And the straightforward answer to the earlier light is simply this:

God created light before He created or appointed the ordinary bearers of light.

We may still ask what physical source carried that light.

Genesis does not tell us.

Some have called it divine light.

Some have proposed a created light independent of the sun.

Some have suggested that the sun existed but had not yet been assigned its function.

We can list those proposals.

We cannot preach any one of them as though Genesis stated it plainly.

The text tells us what we need to know.

God commanded light.

God separated light from darkness.

God called the light Day.

God later appointed the luminaries to govern and mark the established order.

There is no contradiction unless we first assume that God cannot produce light without the sun.

And Genesis never gives us that assumption.

At this point, someone may say,

"But one day with the Lord is as a thousand years."

That comes from 2 Peter 3:8.

Let us read the whole statement.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing,
that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,
and a thousand years as one day."

Peter does not say that every Biblical day equals one thousand years.

He says one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,
and a thousand years as one day.

The word is "as."

It is a comparison.

Peter is explaining that God is not slow,
forgetful, or trapped inside our experience of time.

The next verse says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,
as some men count slackness;
but is longsuffering to us-ward,
not willing that any should perish,
but that all should come to repentance."

The subject is God's patience concerning His promise.

It is not a mathematical formula for converting creation days into millennia.

Psalm 90:4 says something similar.

"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past,
and as a watch in the night."

Again, the point is God's greatness over time.

It does not redefine every occurrence of yom.

If we use 2 Peter as an equation,
then we must apply both sides.

One day would become a thousand years,
and a thousand years would become one day.

That does not solve the creation question.

It misses Peter's point.

Another person will observe that the seventh day does not end with the words,
"the evening and the morning were the seventh day."

That is correct.

Genesis 2:2 and 3 says,

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made;
and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

"And God blessed the seventh day,
and sanctified it:

because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

Hebrews chapter 4 uses God's rest as a picture of the rest into which believers may enter.

Some conclude that the seventh day must therefore continue indefinitely.

That is worth considering.

But the continuing spiritual significance of God's rest does not require the seventh day to remain
a never-ending calendar day.

The Passover has continuing spiritual significance.

The original Passover night still had an ending.

The Sabbath has continuing theological meaning.

An individual Sabbath day still ends.

The absence of the evening-and-morning refrain on Day Seven is meaningful.

It emphasizes completion and rest.

But it does not automatically change the length of Days One through Six.

Now let us ask what ancient readers thought.

We must first establish a boundary.

The Book of Jubilees is not Genesis.

First Enoch is not Genesis.

Second Enoch is not Genesis.

The writings of Philo and Josephus are not inspired Scripture.

Ancient books can show us how ancient people interpreted the Bible.

They cannot speak with the authority of the Bible itself.

They are witnesses to interpretation.

They are not additional chapters of inspired revelation.

With that boundary in place,

their testimony is fascinating.

The Septuagint was the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

It was produced centuries before our modern arguments about geology,

evolution, and the age of the universe.

In Genesis 1, the Greek translators preserved the numbered sequence.

They used the Greek word *hemera* for day.

They gave us day one,

the second day, the third day,

and the continuing order.

The translation does not tell us everything the translators believed about duration.

But it shows that they recognized and preserved the day-by-day construction.

The Book of Jubilees was probably written during the second century before Christ.

Its second chapter retells creation.

It places the sun, moon,

and stars on the fourth day.

It presents the works of creation in an ordered six-day sequence.

Then it ties that sequence closely to Sabbath observance.

The author did not appear embarrassed by light before the sun.

He repeated the sequence.

For that ancient Jewish writer,

the fourth-day luminaries were part of an ordered creation week.

The writing known as 4 Ezra,

also called 2 Esdras in some arrangements,

retells the creation sequence as well.

It speaks first of light,

then the firmament, then the land,

then the sun, moon,

and stars.

Again,
an ancient reader noticed the sequence and repeated it without treating it as a fatal contradiction.
Second Enoch also recounts creation in ordered days.
It places the heavenly lights on the fourth day.
The date and textual history of Second Enoch are debated,
so we should use it cautiously.
But it remains evidence that the day-by-day reading is not a recent invention.
First Enoch requires a different kind of caution.
Its Astronomical Book contains detailed discussions of the sun,
moon, seasons,
and a 364-day calendar.
It shows how seriously some ancient Jewish communities connected the heavenly lights with the
measurement of sacred time.
But it does not directly settle the length of the six creation days.
We should not ask First Enoch to answer a question it does not plainly answer.
Josephus lived in the first century after Christ.
In his Antiquities of the Jews,
he retold the Genesis account for a wider audience.
He said that on the fourth day God adorned heaven with the sun,
moon, and stars.
He then stated that Moses said the world and everything in it were made in six days.
Josephus presents a straightforward six-day sequence.
That matters historically.
It tells us that a first-century Jewish reader could understand Genesis in the ordinary sequential
sense.
But ancient interpretation was not unanimous.
Philo of Alexandria lived around the time of Christ.
He was a Jewish thinker deeply influenced by Greek philosophy.
Philo argued that God did not need a length of time to create.
He believed God could do everything at once.
He treated the six-day arrangement as communicating order,
perfection, and the significance of the number six.

Philo is important because he proves that a nonchronological reading did not begin with Charles Darwin.

People sometimes say,

"No one questioned six ordinary days until modern science frightened Christians."

That statement is too broad.

Philo interpreted the days differently long before modern geology.

But Philo does not prove that his interpretation is correct.

He proves that it is ancient.

Age and truth are not the same thing.

An old interpretation can be mistaken.

A recent observation can be accurate.

Every interpretation must still be tested by Scripture.

Later rabbinic writings also asked about the light of Day One.

Some rabbis proposed a special primordial light that God later concealed or reserved.

Those discussions show that Jewish teachers saw a distinction between the first light and the ordinary light of the sun.

Their explanations vary.

We should not adopt their legends as doctrine.

But we can recognize the historical point.

The question of light before the sun is not new.

Ancient readers saw it, discussed it,
and proposed answers.

When we place these witnesses together,
what do we find?

We do not find perfect agreement.

Jubilees, Josephus,

4 Ezra, and Second Enoch preserve an ordered sequence.

Philo reads the six days primarily as divine order rather than elapsed duration.

First Enoch focuses upon the luminaries and calendar without directly defining the creation days.

That diversity should make us both confident and humble.

Confident, because the ordinary-day reading is demonstrably ancient.

Humble,

because faithful people were discussing how to understand the account long before our generation arrived.

Now we should consider the main interpretations Christians hold today.

The ordinary-day view understands the six days as successive ordinary days.

It emphasizes the numbering, evening and morning,
the sequence,
and the Sabbath pattern.

Its principal challenge is explaining the first three days without the sun.

Genesis answers that challenge at the level of revelation by giving us light and darkness before the luminaries.

It does not explain the physical mechanism.

The day-age view understands each day as a long era.

It rightly observes that yom can refer to a broader period.

It attempts to relate Genesis to a very old earth and universe.

But it faces serious textual questions.

Why are the days numbered in sequence?

Why evening and morning?

Why is Israel's ordinary workweek patterned after creation week?

And does the order of long ages actually match every scientific reconstruction people try to place upon it?

The literary-framework view emphasizes the structure of the chapter.

And there is a beautiful structure.

Day One establishes light and darkness.

Day Four fills that realm with the greater light,
lesser light,
and stars.

Day Two separates the waters and establishes the sky.

Day Five fills sea and sky with living creatures.

Day Three brings dry land and vegetation.

Day Six fills the land with animals and mankind.

That arrangement is real.

We should see it.

But literary structure does not automatically cancel history.
A carefully organized account can still describe an actual sequence.
The analogical-day view says God's workdays are real and provide the pattern for our days,
but they need not be identical to human days in duration.
That view takes the Sabbath comparison seriously.
It also recognizes that God's work is not limited like ours.
Its difficulty is that Genesis never plainly tells us the days have unequal or indefinite lengths.
Each position notices something true.
The ordinary-day view notices grammar and sequence.
The day-age view notices the broader range of yom.
The framework view notices literary structure.
The analogical view notices the difference between divine work and human work.
Our task is not to ridicule what another reader has noticed.
Our task is to ask which interpretation best accounts for all the evidence with the fewest
assumptions added to the text.
For me,
the cumulative case matters.
Yom alone does not settle the issue.
But yom is not alone.
It is numbered.
It is joined with evening and morning.
The days proceed in sequence.
They contain defined acts of creation.
They culminate in the seventh-day rest.
And they become the pattern for Israel's six-day workweek.
When those pieces are placed together,
six ordinary creation days remain the most natural reading.
That conclusion does not require us to say that yom always means 24 hours.
It does not.
It does not require us to claim that every question about the age of the earth has been answered.
It has not.
It does not require us to turn the age of the earth into a test of salvation.

Salvation does not come by correctly calculating the date of creation.

It comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

And it does not give us permission to treat another Christian with contempt.

We can disagree about the duration of the creation days while agreeing that God is the Creator,

Scripture is true,

mankind bears God's image,

sin is real,

Christ died for our sins,

and Christ rose bodily from the grave.

But humility does not mean that every interpretation is equally persuasive.

After weighing the words,

the grammar,

the sequence,

the Sabbath,

and the ancient witnesses,

the ordinary-day reading best fits the complete Biblical pattern.

There is another lesson hidden in the order of creation.

God did not make the sun until the text was ready to place the sun in its proper position.

It is not a god.

It is a lamp in God's house.

It does not command the seasons by its own authority.

It performs the task God assigns.

The moon is not a goddess.

The stars do not write your destiny.

They declare the glory of the One who made them.

Psalm 19:1 says,

"The heavens declare the glory of God;

and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

Creation is not the Creator.

The light is not the Creator.

The sun is not the Creator.

Time is not the Creator.

God stands above them all.

And the New Testament tells us who was present in the beginning.

John 1:1 says,

"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."

Verse 3 says,

"All things were made by him;
and without him was not any thing made that was made."

The Jesus who walked beside the Sea of Galilee is not merely part of creation.

He is the eternal Word through whom creation came into being.

Colossians 1:16 says,

"For by him were all things created,
that are in heaven,
and that are in earth,
visible and invisible."

Verse 17 says,

"And he is before all things,
and by him all things consist."

The deepest question is not merely,

"How long did creation take?"

The deepest question is,

"Do you know the Creator?"

You can pronounce yom correctly and still not know Jesus.

You can win an argument about Day Four and still remain in spiritual darkness.

You can memorize every interpretation of Genesis and still be separated from God by sin.

The God who said,

"Let there be light,"

is able to bring light into a darkened heart.

Second Corinthians 4:6 says,

"For God,
who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,

hath shined in our hearts,
to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
The first creation began with light shining into darkness.
The new creation begins when the light of Christ shines into a human heart.
The Bible says that all have sinned.
We have rejected the authority of our Creator.
We have chosen our own way.
The wages of sin is death.
But the Creator entered His creation.
Jesus Christ took upon Himself a human body.
He lived without sin.
He went to the cross willingly.
He bore our sins in His own body.
He died.
He was buried.
And on the third day,
He rose from the grave.
The One who created life defeated death.
The One who commanded the first light offers eternal life to you.
You are not saved by joining Reason Together Church.
You are not saved by becoming a young-earth creationist.
You are not saved by becoming an old-earth creationist.
You are saved by placing your faith in Jesus Christ.
Romans 10:9 says,
"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,
and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,
thou shalt be saved."
If you have never trusted Jesus Christ,
you can call upon Him today.
The words of a prayer do not save you.
Jesus saves you.
But prayer can express the repentance and faith of your heart.

You may pray something like this:

Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner.

I believe that You are the Son of God.

I believe that You died on the cross for my sins.

I believe that You were buried.

I believe that You rose again.

Please forgive me.

I turn from my sin,

and I place my faith in You alone.

Come into my life.

Save me,

and help me follow You.

Thank You for giving me eternal life.

Amen.

If you prayed that prayer from your heart,

please speak with me after the service,

send us a message,

or tell a Bible-believing pastor.

We want to help you take your next steps with Christ.

For those who already know Jesus,

this study gives us a practical assignment.

This week,

read Genesis 1 slowly.

Do not read only the parts you remember.

Notice every use of the word day.

Circle evening and morning.

Notice the numbers.

Compare light on Day One with the lights on Day Four.

Then read Exodus 20:8 through 11.

Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If someone disagrees with you,

do not begin by calling that person a compromiser,
an unbeliever,
or ignorant.

Ask what evidence they find most persuasive.

Listen carefully.

Then open the Bible together.

Explain that a Hebrew word can have several meanings,
but context selects the meaning.

Show them Genesis 2:4 honestly.

Show them the numbered days honestly.

Show them evening and morning honestly.

Show them the Sabbath pattern honestly.

We do not need to hide evidence that appears inconvenient.

Truth does not need that kind of protection.

When you share this study,

do not make the ancient books the center.

Use them as windows into interpretation,
not as replacements for Scripture.

Jubilees can show us that the ordered reading is ancient.

Josephus can show us how a first-century Jewish historian read the account.

Philo can show us that nonchronological interpretation is also ancient.

But Genesis must remain open on the table.

The question is not,

"Which ancient writer do I like best?"

The question is,

"What reading best accounts for the words God has preserved?"

And remember the conclusion that matters most.

Before there was a sun,

God said,

"Let there be light."

Before you understood how to ask the question,

God's Word was already true.

Before you ever looked toward Him,
the Creator had already looked toward you in mercy.
The One who made the first morning also stepped out of a tomb on resurrection morning.
Because He lives,
darkness does not have the final word.
Sin does not have the final word.
Death does not have the final word.
Jesus Christ has the final word.
So bring your questions.
Open your Bible.
Study the words.
Consider the context.
Reason carefully.
Treat one another with grace.
And worship the God who made the heavens,
the earth,
the light,
the sun,
the days,
and every one of us.
Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S
COMMENTARY
SIX LITERAL DAYS?

What Does the Word “Day” Actually Mean in Genesis 1?

Genesis 1:1-2:4; Exodus 20:8-11; Psalm 90:4; John 1:1-5; Hebrews 4:1-11 KJV

“And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Genesis 1:5

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

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Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Genesis uses the Hebrew word *yom* in more than one sense, so the word by itself does not prove the length of the creation days. In Genesis 1, however, the numbered sequence, the repeated boundary formula ‘evening and morning,’ the ordered progression and the Sabbath pattern together favor six successive ordinary days as the most natural reading.

Day One does not require the sun to be the source of its light. Genesis distinguishes the created light, or, from the luminaries, *me'orot*, appointed on Day Four. God establishes light and the alternation of darkness before He appoints the heavenly lights to govern, mark and display that order.

Genesis 2:4 proves that *yom* can summarize a larger occasion, but it does not cancel the more specific numbered uses in Genesis 1. Meaning is determined by grammar, syntax and literary setting. A broad sense in one construction cannot simply be transferred into every other construction.

Ancient Jewish and Christian-era witnesses did not speak with one voice. Jubilees and Josephus preserve a sequential six-day reading. Philo treats the sixfold order in a more nonchronological way. Later Jewish interpretation also discussed primordial light before the sun. Ancient diversity shows that questions about the days did not begin with modern geology.

The pastor should teach the strongest reading without making the duration of the creation days a test of salvation. The text deserves precision, charity and confidence. Its controlling confession is that God alone creates, orders and rules all things, and that the light of creation ultimately points us to Jesus Christ.

1. The Title and the Governing Question

The public title, ‘Six Literal Days?’ names the question people usually ask, but the governing interpretive question is narrower: What does the word ‘day’ actually mean in Genesis 1? Beginning with the word keeps the study from assuming either a young-earth or an old-earth conclusion before the text has been heard.

The commentary therefore moves in layers. It first studies the Hebrew noun *yom*, then the clauses in which it appears, then the whole creation account, then the Sabbath interpretation in Exodus and finally the reception of Genesis among ancient readers. The conclusion should arise from the combined evidence, not from one isolated dictionary entry.

2. The Controlling Interpretive Rule

A word has a range of possible meanings, but a sentence selects the sense that fits its context. Dictionaries describe possibilities. Grammar, syntax, literary structure and authorial use determine which possibility is active in a particular passage. This distinction is essential whenever someone says, ‘The Hebrew word can mean an age.’

The question is not whether yom can ever describe a longer period. It plainly can. The question is whether the numbered days of Genesis 1 use it that way. The interpreter must account for every relevant feature, including the number attached to the word, the evening-and-morning formula, the sequence of creative acts and the later Sabbath pattern.

3. The Hebrew Word Yom

The Hebrew noun יוֹם, transliterated yom, is commonly translated ‘day.’ Its plural is yamim. Like the English word day, it can refer to the lighted portion of a day, a complete day, a particular occasion or a broader time. Its flexibility is normal language, not a defect in revelation.

A lexical range does not make every meaning equally likely in every verse. English speakers understand the difference between ‘day and night,’ ‘three days’ and ‘in my grandfather’s day’ without changing the dictionary. Hebrew readers likewise used surrounding words and literary context to recognize the intended sense.

4. Yom as Daylight in Genesis 1:5

Genesis 1:5 says, ‘And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.’ In the first half of the verse, Day names the lighted portion in contrast with Night. This is a daylight sense of yom. The verse itself therefore demonstrates that the word can denote less than a complete day.

The second half says, ‘And the evening and the morning were the first day.’ Here the word belongs to a numbered unit that includes evening and morning. The same verse moves from a named light period to a completed first day. Context, not the bare noun, distinguishes the uses.

5. Yom as an Ordinary Calendar Day

Throughout the Old Testament, yom frequently denotes an ordinary day in the flow of history. Genesis speaks of particular days on which events occurred. The Flood narrative dates events by days, months and years. Israel’s laws also count days for labor, rest, cleansing and feasts.

An ordinary day need not always be defined by a modern clock or by a technical statement of twenty-four hours. In Biblical narrative it is the familiar cycle by which evenings, mornings and successive events are counted. That ordinary narrative sense is the principal candidate when Genesis numbers the creation days.

6. Yom as an Occasion or Time

Yom may also mean an occasion, as in expressions such as ‘the day of battle,’ ‘the day of trouble’ or ‘the day of the LORD.’ Such phrases focus on what characterizes a time rather than measuring one revolution of the earth. The context may describe an event, season of judgment or period of divine action.

This usage establishes semantic breadth, but it does not decide Genesis 1. A construct phrase such as ‘day of trouble’ differs from a numbered series such as first day, second day and third day. Similar vocabulary can function differently when the grammar changes.

7. Genesis 2:4 and the Broader Use

Genesis 2:4 says, ‘These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.’ The phrase ‘in the day that’ summarizes the creation work just narrated. Here yom functions idiomatically as ‘when’ or ‘at the time when.’

This verse is important because it prevents the claim that yom always means a twenty-four-hour day. It does not follow that each numbered day in chapter 1 is equally broad. Genesis 2:4 uses a different construction for a summary statement. The same author can use one word in related but distinct senses.

8. Numbered Days and Their Normal Force

Genesis 1 marks the days with ordinal or cardinal numbers in an ordered series. Day One is followed by a second day, a third day, a fourth day, a fifth day and a sixth day. The numbering does not mathematically force a particular duration, but it strongly presents succession and bounded units.

When yom is joined to a number in historical prose, it ordinarily identifies countable days. Exceptions must be demonstrated from their own contexts. The burden of interpretation is therefore not met merely by showing that yom can have a broad meaning somewhere else.

9. Why Genesis Says ‘Day One’

The Hebrew of Genesis 1:5 is often rendered more literally ‘day one’ rather than ‘the first day.’ The following days use forms corresponding to second, third and so forth. Day One establishes the first complete unit in the sequence and begins the pattern by which the remaining days are counted.

The wording does not make Day One timeless. It presents the inauguration of the ordered cycle. The KJV's ‘the first day’ communicates the sequence correctly, while the Hebrew detail reminds the pastor that the pattern is being established rather than merely labeled after the fact.

10. The Evening-and-Morning Formula

Each of the first six days closes with a recurring formula: ‘and the evening and the morning were’ the stated day. The repetition gives the account rhythm and marks completion. Evening and morning are not vague symbols dropped into unrelated visions. They serve as boundaries in a sequence.

The phrase does not contain the technical expression ‘twenty-four hours,’ yet it sounds like ordinary time to the first hearers. A figurative interpretation must explain why a long age repeatedly closes with evening and morning and why the numbered order proceeds without interruption.

11. Does the Order Mean Evening First?

Some readers infer from ‘evening and morning’ that every Biblical day must begin at sunset. Later Israelite practice often reckoned sacred days from evening to evening, as Leviticus 23:32 illustrates. Genesis 1, however, is principally marking the transition through darkness toward morning and the completion of each unit.

The commentary need not settle every question about ancient civil calendars. Its stronger point is that the repeated pair describes a bounded cycle. The formula contributes to the ordinary-day reading whether one emphasizes the start at evening or the movement from evening into morning.

12. Day Seven and the Missing Formula

Genesis 2:1-3 does not close the seventh day with the words ‘evening and morning.’ Some interpreters argue that God's rest therefore continues and that the seventh day is an open-ended age. Hebrews 4 develops the continuing availability of God's rest, which gives this observation theological importance.

The missing formula does not require the first six days to become ages. The seventh day is literarily distinct because the creation work is finished and God sanctifies the day. A unique theological continuation of divine rest can be affirmed while the preceding workdays remain ordinary successive days.

13. The Verb Shabath and Divine Rest

Genesis 2:2 says that God ‘rested’ on the seventh day. The Hebrew verb shabath means to cease or stop. It does not imply that the omnipotent Creator became exhausted. God ceased from the work of creating because the ordered world was complete.

This cessation gives the week its theological shape: six days of work and one sanctified day of rest. The pattern later governs Israel's life. The analogy is more direct if the units correspond as days, though the greatness of God's creative work and the smallness of human labor are obviously not equal.

14. Exodus 20 Interprets Genesis

The fourth commandment says, ‘Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God.’ It then gives the reason: ‘For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.’

Exodus does more than allude to creation. It places God's six days and Israel's six days within one work-rest pattern. This is among the strongest canonical arguments for ordinary days. An age-day reading must explain why unequal units establish the stated weekly rhythm.

15. Exodus 31 and the Covenant Sign

Exodus 31:15-17 repeats the six-and-one pattern and calls the Sabbath a sign between the LORD and Israel. ‘For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.’ The language joins creation order to covenant obedience.

‘Was refreshed’ is accommodated language describing satisfaction and cessation, not divine fatigue. The passage assumes the creation week as the ground of Israel's week. Whatever questions remain about Genesis, the canonical use of the account should receive greater weight than a modern desire to make the text fit a preferred chronology.

16. The Meaning of ‘Literal’

The word literal can create confusion. If it means reading words according to their normal grammatical and literary sense, it is essential. If it means that every expression must be woodenly physical, it is inadequate. God ‘called’ the light Day, ‘saw’ that it was good and ‘rested,’ yet the language speaks truly without reducing God to a creature.

The better claim is that Genesis presents six real, successive creation days. This wording honors the historical and literary character of the account while allowing figures of speech, theological depth and ordinary accommodation within the narrative.

17. What Is Light on Day One?

Genesis 1:3 says, ‘And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.’ The Hebrew noun is אֹר, or, meaning light. The text does not yet identify a lamp, star or sun. It presents light as a created reality obedient to God's command.

The pastor may say with confidence that the first light did not depend upon the named luminaries of Day Four. He should not say with equal confidence that the light was God's uncreated glory, a temporary star or the hidden sun. Those proposals go beyond the explicit statement.

18. The Luminaries on Day Four

Genesis 1:14 uses מְאֹרוֹת, me'orot, often translated 'lights.' The word refers to light-bearers or luminaries. The chapter distinguishes light itself from the heavenly bodies appointed to give light upon the earth and to rule the day and night.

This lexical distinction answers part of the apparent problem. Day One establishes light and the separation of light from darkness. Day Four appoints the greater light, the lesser light and the stars within the ordered heavens. Genesis does not say that light can exist only after the sun is named.

19. The Functions Assigned on Day Four

The luminaries are given several functions: to divide day from night, to be for signs, seasons, days and years, to give light upon the earth and to rule the day and night. Their appointment makes the created order observable, governable and useful for human timekeeping.

A clock measures time but does not create time. In the same way, the sun can mark and govern days without being the author of the first day. God is the Creator of the order that the sun later administers.

20. Did God Create or Appoint the Sun on Day Four?

Some propose that the sun already existed and merely became visible or functionally appointed on Day Four. They sometimes appeal to the Hebrew verb asah, 'made,' as though it must mean appointing something previously created. The verb is broad, but its breadth does not itself establish an earlier creation of the sun.

The text presents God's making and placing of the luminaries as Day Four work. A functional emphasis is certainly present because their tasks are listed, but one should not claim that Hebrew grammar proves the sun existed behind clouds from Day One. That remains an interpretive model.

21. Does a Solar Day Require the Sun?

In ordinary modern speech, a solar day is measured by the earth's relation to the sun. Genesis asks a more basic question: can God establish an alternating period of light and darkness before appointing the permanent luminary that later governs it? The narrative answers yes.

The sun is not a rival deity or the source of cosmic order. It is a creature placed in service. Genesis even delays naming it directly, calling it the greater light. This would have spoken powerfully in cultures that worshiped heavenly bodies.

22. Literary Structure and Historical Sequence

Genesis 1 is artistically ordered. Days One through Three form realms or separations, and Days Four through Six populate or govern corresponding realms. Light and darkness correspond to luminaries, sky and waters to birds and sea creatures, and dry land to animals and humanity.

Literary arrangement does not make the events unreal or nonsequential. Historical narratives can be carefully structured. The framework insight helps readers see theology and correspondence, but it must still explain the numbered progression, the evening-and-morning closures and the Sabbath interpretation.

23. The Framework Interpretation

The framework view treats the days chiefly as a literary arrangement rather than a chronological schedule. It emphasizes the parallel panels and God's ordering of creation into realms and rulers. Its strength is attention to composition and theological purpose.

Its weakness appears when literary symmetry is made to cancel temporal sequence. Genesis repeatedly advances from one day to the next, and Exodus treats the sequence as the pattern of a week. Structure is real evidence, but it is not automatically evidence against chronology.

24. The Day-Age Interpretation

The day-age view understands each creation day as a long epoch. It appeals to the broad semantic range of *yom*, Psalm 90:4 and the possibility that divine creative activity is described from God's perspective. It often attempts to relate Genesis to long scientific chronologies.

Its principal textual difficulty is the combined force of numbered days, evening and morning and the Sabbath analogy. It also faces questions about matching the order of Genesis to proposed natural history. Showing that *yom* can mean a period is only the beginning of the argument, not its completion.

25. The Analogical-Day Interpretation

The analogical view holds that God's workdays are real but not necessarily identical in duration to human days. Human weeks imitate the divine pattern by analogy. This approach takes Exodus seriously while allowing a distinction between Creator time and creature time.

The view offers a thoughtful account of divine accommodation, but the text does not signal that the first six units differ in kind from the days used to ground Israel's labor. The analogy is clearest when the pattern shares ordinary temporal units, even though God's work is infinitely greater.

26. The Temple or Inauguration Reading

Some recent interpreters emphasize creation as God's cosmic temple and the seven days as an inauguration of functions. Genesis certainly presents an ordered world in which God rules, assigns purposes and ultimately rests. Temple themes can illuminate the theological goal of the account.

Function and material creation need not be opponents. Genesis speaks of things coming into being, being separated, being made and being placed. A functional reading becomes too narrow if it treats the text as unconcerned with material origins. The commentary should receive genuine insight without accepting an unnecessary either-or.

27. The Gap Interpretation

The gap view places a long interval between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, sometimes adding a prior world and judgment. It became popular as a way to accommodate great age while retaining ordinary days for the six-day work.

Genesis does not explicitly describe a former creation, satanic catastrophe or ruined civilization in that interval. The grammar can be discussed, but the larger reconstruction imports events the passage does not narrate. It should not be taught as though the gap were stated in the Hebrew text.

28. Psalm 90:4

Psalm 90:4 says, 'For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.' The verse magnifies God's eternity against the brevity of human life. It is a poetic comparison, not a conversion table for prophetic or creation days.

Moses does not say that every divine day equals exactly one thousand human years. 'Yesterday' and 'a watch in the night' are parallel images of how swiftly vast human spans stand before the eternal God. The verse teaches God's relation to time, not the duration of Genesis 1.

29. Second Peter 3:8

Second Peter 3:8 echoes the Psalm: 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' The two directions of the comparison prevent a mathematical formula. Peter answers scoffers who mistake divine patience for failure.

The next verse gives the purpose: the Lord is longsuffering, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' Using the verse to turn each creation day into one thousand years misses Peter's pastoral argument and still would not produce geological ages.

30. Hebrews 4 and the Continuing Rest

Hebrews 4 connects God's seventh-day rest with a rest that remains for the people of God. The author treats Genesis as the foundation of a continuing theological reality. Believers are summoned to enter God's rest through faith and obedience.

This theological extension does not require the seventh day to be one unending measured day. Biblical events often establish continuing realities. Christ's once-for-all work creates an enduring salvation without making the day of the crucifixion endless. Hebrews deepens the meaning of the Sabbath without rewriting the first six days.

31. The Septuagint

The ancient Greek translation known as the Septuagint renders Hebrew yom in Genesis 1 with ἡμέρα, hemera, the ordinary Greek word for day. It also preserves the numbered sequence and the evening-and-morning formula. The translators did not replace the days with explicit words for ages.

Greek hemera, like Hebrew yom and English day, can have broader uses. The Septuagint therefore confirms how ancient Jewish translators represented the wording, but it does not by itself settle every question of duration. Its importance lies in preserving the same contextual pattern.

32. Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees, a Jewish work from the Second Temple period, retells creation in a strongly ordered sequence. Its second chapter distributes God's works across six days and gives sustained attention to the seventh-day Sabbath. The week becomes foundational to sacred order.

Jubilees is not Scripture and does not control Genesis. It is valuable as reception history because it shows an ancient Jewish reader treating the days sequentially and linking them directly to Sabbath observance. This reading plainly existed long before modern creation debates.

33. Josephus

In the first book of Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus retells the creation account in sequence, moving through the days and concluding with the seventh-day rest. His purpose is historical explanation for a Greco-Roman audience rather than detailed Hebrew lexicography.

Josephus supports the conclusion that a straightforward sequential reading was natural to an ancient Jewish historian. He does not answer modern questions about physics or geology, and his summary should not be pressed beyond what he says.

34. Philo of Alexandria

Philo's *On the Creation* gives the six days a highly philosophical interpretation. He argues that God did not need time to create and that the numbered order displays intelligible arrangement. The days communicate order, number and pattern more than divine limitation.

Philo is important because he predates modern geology. A nonchronological or strongly symbolic treatment of the six days therefore cannot be dismissed as a modern invention. Yet antiquity does not make an interpretation correct. Philo's Platonic framework must be weighed against the grammar and canonical use of Genesis.

35. Second Enoch

Second Enoch contains an extended creation discourse arranged through a sequence of days, including the establishment of light and heavenly bodies. The work survives in later manuscripts and its date and textual history are disputed, so it must be used cautiously.

Its value is comparative rather than decisive. It shows how another ancient Jewish or Jewish-influenced tradition expanded the Genesis week. Its elaborations are not hidden details supplied by inspiration. They reveal reception, imagination and theological development around the Biblical account.

36. Fourth Ezra

Fourth Ezra, also known in some traditions as Second Esdras, recounts the works of creation in a prayer that follows the ordered days. It remembers God's command, the separation of waters, the appearance of dry land, the luminaries, living creatures and Adam.

The passage witnesses to a sequential reading of the creation acts within ancient Jewish reflection. It is a theological retelling, not an independent eyewitness account. Its authority remains subordinate to Genesis, but it helps establish how the text was remembered.

37. Genesis Rabbah and the First Light

Genesis Rabbah preserves later rabbinic discussion about the light created on the first day. Some traditions distinguish that primordial light from the sun and speak of God reserving or hiding it for the righteous. The discussion recognizes that Genesis itself places light before the luminaries.

These interpretations are imaginative and theological. They show that ancient rabbis noticed the same textual question modern readers ask. They do not prove the physical nature of the first light. The inspired text says less, and the pastor should preserve that restraint.

38. The Babylonian Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish is a Mesopotamian creation epic in which divine conflict, kingship and the ordering of the cosmos are central. Heavenly bodies and calendar functions appear within that order. It is sometimes compared with Genesis because both address cosmic beginnings.

The contrasts are more important than superficial similarities. Genesis has one sovereign God who creates by command without combat, genealogy among gods or divine need. Enuma Elish does not provide a dictionary for yom or an alternate inspired chronology. It supplies cultural background against which Genesis' monotheism stands sharply.

39. Atrahasis and Mesopotamian Flood Tradition

Atrahasis joins accounts of human creation, population trouble and a great flood. Humanity is made to relieve the gods of labor, and divine motives are divided and unstable. The work helps historians understand ancient Near Eastern themes shared across cultures.

Genesis transforms the theological world of those themes. Humanity bears God's image, creation is declared good and judgment is moral rather than divine irritation at noise. Atrahasis says little that can determine the length of Genesis' days, but comparison highlights the unique character of Biblical revelation.

40. Egyptian Creation Texts

Egyptian traditions describe creation through differing local theologies, including emergence from primordial waters, divine speech and the roles of solar deities. Because Egypt preserved several creation centers, there is no single Egyptian creation book equivalent to Genesis 1.

These texts illuminate the religious environment in which sun, moon and stars could be worshiped. Genesis demotes every luminary to created service. The sun is not even named as a god. It is the greater light appointed by the one Creator.

41. What the Ancient Witnesses Can Establish

Ancient witnesses can show how early communities read, retold and expanded Genesis. They establish that sequential readings are ancient, that philosophical nonchronological readings are also ancient and that the puzzle of light before the sun was noticed long ago.

They cannot establish the meaning of Genesis merely by majority vote. Their dates, genres and theological commitments differ. The Hebrew text and its canonical interpretation remain primary. Reception history is a witness to interpretation, not a replacement for exegesis.

42. Why Ancient Diversity Matters

The existence of ancient diversity should lower the temperature of modern discussion. A person does not become dishonest merely by seeing literary or analogical dimensions in the days. Nor is an ordinary-day reading a recent reaction against science. Both claims misrepresent the history.

Charity does not require indecision. After hearing the alternatives, a pastor may still conclude that six successive ordinary days best account for the wording. He can state that conclusion firmly while acknowledging that faithful interpreters have differed over how the temporal language functions.

43. Creation and Modern Science

Scientific models describe physical history through measurements, inference and present processes. Biblical interpretation asks what the inspired text communicates through ancient Hebrew and canonical context. The disciplines may interact, but neither should be made to answer a question it has not actually addressed.

The commentary's conclusion is textual: the most natural reading of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20 is six ordinary successive days. That conclusion should not be supported by exaggerated scientific claims or frightened by every changing proposal. Scripture's authority does not depend upon one speculative harmonization.

44. Claims That May Be Taught with High Confidence

Yom has a real semantic range. Genesis 1:5 itself uses the word for the lighted portion and for the completed first day. Genesis 2:4 uses it broadly. The numbered creation days are sequential, the first six close with evening and morning and Exodus grounds Israel's week in God's creation week.

Genesis distinguishes light from the light-bearers. The sun is created and appointed by God, not worshiped as a deity or treated as the source of time itself. Ancient readers recognized both the sequence of days and the question of light before the sun.

45. Claims That Must Remain Conditional

The first light may have been a created light independent of the sun. It may have involved a source or condition God chose not to identify. The sun may have received a new governing function on Day Four. These are reasonable possibilities, but the text does not disclose the physical mechanism.

Literary correspondences may be deliberate, and temple themes may enrich the account. The seventh-day rest may continue theologically. None of these observations, standing alone, proves that the first six days were long ages or purely symbolic panels.

46. Claims That Should Be Rejected

Reject the claim that yom always means twenty-four hours. Reject the opposite claim that lexical flexibility makes the creation days indefinite. Reject the claim that Psalm 90 or Second Peter 3 supplies a day-to-thousand-years formula. Reject the claim that the Hebrew verb *asah* proves the sun existed long before Day Four.

Reject the claim that Genesis explicitly identifies the first light as God's glory. Reject the claim that all ancient Jews agreed. Reject any attempt to make a particular creation-day interpretation the ground of salvation. The Gospel rests upon Jesus Christ, not upon mastery of a chronology debate.

47. Recommended Public Wording

Say, 'The word yom can have several meanings, but the context of Genesis 1 narrows the likely sense.' Say, 'The numbered sequence, evening and morning and the Sabbath pattern favor ordinary successive days.' Say, 'Genesis distinguishes light on Day One from the luminaries appointed on Day Four.'

Say, 'Ancient readers did not all interpret the days identically, though straightforward sequential readings are early and prominent.' Say, 'The exact physical source of the first light is not revealed.' Such wording is confident where Scripture is clear and restrained where interpretation begins.

48. Questions and Clarifications

Can yom mean an age? It can describe a broader time, but that possibility does not settle Genesis 1. Does evening and morning prove twenty-four measured hours? It strongly marks ordinary bounded days, though the phrase itself is not a clock reading. Was the sun created on Day Four? The text places God's making, appointment and placement of the luminaries in Day Four.

How could there be days before the sun? God established light, darkness and succession before appointing the sun to govern and mark them. Did ancient interpreters agree? No. Jubilees and Josephus read sequentially, while Philo emphasized nonchronological order. Which reading is strongest? Six real successive ordinary days best integrates the immediate and canonical evidence.

49. The Whole-Bible Movement

The Bible begins with God commanding light into darkness. John 1 identifies the eternal Word through whom all things were made and declares, 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' Creation is not an isolated puzzle. It opens the revelation of the Son.

Second Corinthians 4:6 joins creation and conversion: 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts.' The Creator who spoke physical light brings saving knowledge through Jesus Christ. The chronology question matters, but the Creator's redemptive purpose is greater.

50. Gospel and Pastoral Application

The congregation should leave with more than a position. Genesis removes the sun, the earth and humanity from the throne. None is self-existing. Every creature receives being, place and purpose from God. Worship belongs to the Creator alone.

Christians may reason carefully and disagree charitably because salvation is not earned by linguistic certainty. Yet humility is not indifference. We listen closely because these are God's words. We receive the creation week as His ordered work and trust the same Word who called light from darkness to make us new.

51. Source Notes for the Pastor

Primary Biblical texts include Genesis 1:1-2:4, Exodus 20:8-11, Exodus 31:12-17, Leviticus 23:32, Psalm 90:1-4, John 1:1-5, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 4:1-11 and 2 Peter 3:8-9. Lexical study should consult standard Hebrew lexicons under yom, or, ma'or and shabath.

Ancient sources include the Septuagint of Genesis, Jubilees 2, Josephus' Antiquities Book 1, Philo's On the Creation, 2 Enoch 30, 4 Ezra 6:38-54 and Genesis Rabbah 3. Mesopotamian comparisons include Enuma Elish and Atrahasis. Dates and textual histories should be checked in scholarly editions.

52. Final Commentary Conclusion

The Hebrew word yom does not carry one inflexible duration in every verse. Genesis itself uses it for daylight, a completed numbered day and a summary occasion. Responsible interpretation therefore cannot end with the sentence, 'Day always means twenty-four hours.' It must ask how the word functions here.

In Genesis 1, the cumulative evidence favors six real successive ordinary days. They are numbered, bounded by evening and morning and used in Exodus as the pattern for Israel's workweek and Sabbath. Light before the sun is no contradiction because Genesis distinguishes light from the later luminaries. Before there was a sun to mark the day, there was a God who made the light.