

Exegetical Details Pertaining to Genesis 1–2

J. Paul Tanner, ThM, PhD

1st ed. - May 7, 2020

I.	Gen 1:1 – “In the beginning” (בְּרֵאשִׁית, <i>bʾrēšît</i>) – Definite or Indefinite Phrase?	2
II.	Gen 1:1 – “In the beginning God created” - Independent or Dependent Clause?	3
III.	Gen 1:1 – “the heavens and the earth” - A First Act or A Summary Statement (or Title)	4
A.	A Response to the “Summary View” of Gen 1:1	6
1.	Do the words “the heavens and the earth” in Gen 1:1 and 2:1 form bookends representing all God’s work during the creation week?	6
2.	Is the expression “the heavens and the earth” a technical expression for the total cosmos (i.e., a merism for everything God created)?	6
B.	Conclusion about the Summary View of Gen 1:1	8
IV.	Gen 1:2 – “Now the earth was <i>tōhû wābōhû</i> (תְּהוֹ וְנֶחֱדָה) -	9
A.	The Gap Theory: Is There a Gap of Time Preceding Genesis 1:2?	9
B.	What is the meaning of the words <i>tōhû wābōhû</i> (תְּהוֹ וְנֶחֱדָה)?	11
C.	Conclusions about <i>tōhû wābōhû</i>	13
V.	Gen 2:1 - Does the presence of “darkness” (חֹשֶׁךְ, <i>hōšek</i>) and “the deep” (תְּהוֹמֹת, <i>tʾhôm</i>) in Gen 1:2 Imply Evil or the Result of Judgment?	14
VI.	The Oddity of Light on Day One, But No Sun and Stars until Day Four	15
VII.	The Meaning of “Day” (יּוֹם, <i>yôm</i>) and the Matter of the Day-Age Theory	15
A.	Background and Advocates of the Day-Age Theory	16
B.	Problems with the Day-Age Theory	16
VIII.	The Question of the Historicity of Adam: Was He the First Human?	17
IX.	Is There a Literary Framework That Serves as a Controlling Hermeneutic?	19
A.	A Summary of the Framework View	19
B.	Defense Offered for the Framework View	20
C.	A Refutation of the Framework View	20

INTRODUCTION

Before we can formulate an overall understanding of creation, we first need to look at some of the particulars. By clarifying these preliminary matters, we are in better position to construe the meaning of the whole, especially in how these first three verses relate to one another syntactically. However Genesis 1–2 is construed, one’s view must rest on proper hermeneutical procedure and valid exegetical conclusions.¹

I. Gen 1:1 – “In the beginning” (בְּרֵאשִׁית, *b^rrēšît*) – Definite or Indefinite Phrase?

The Bible begins with the word בְּרֵאשִׁית (*b^rrēšît*), but how should this be translated? Some have observed that the preposition בְּ on the noun רֵאשִׁית is indefinite and understand this as “a beginning,” but not an absolute beginning. In addition, they argue that the noun is *in the construct state* with the words “God created.”² They reason from this that the opening words could be translated “In a beginning when God created” or “When God began to create” (as though it was not an absolute beginning). Such an understanding, however, is incorrect. This should be understood as an absolute beginning. Wenham explains why:

... the absence of the article in בְּרֵאשִׁית does not imply that it is in the construct state. Temporal phrases often lack the article (e.g., Isa 46:10; 40:21; 41:4, 26; Gen 3:22; 6:3, 4; Mic 5:1; Hab 1:12). Nor can it be shown that רֵאשִׁית may not have an absolute sense. It may well have an absolute sense in Isa 46:10, and the analogous expression מְרֵאשִׁית in Prov 8:23 certainly refers to the beginning of all creation. The context of בְּרֵאשִׁית standing at the start of the account of world history makes an absolute sense highly appropriate here (Wenham, 1:12).

To this, Waltke adds,

... both Konig and Heidel have shown that time designations in adverbial expressions do not need the article. Heidel stated:

Terms like *reshith*, “beginning,” *rosh*, “beginning,” *qedem*, “olden times,” and *’olam*, “eternity,” when used in adverbial expressions, occur almost invariably *without* the article, and that in the absolute state.³

Waltke goes on to assert, “More convincing that the word should be understood as an absolute is the fact that all ancient versions (LXX, Vulgate, Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, Targum Onkelos) construed the form as absolute and verse 1 as an independent clause.”⁴ So, Gen 1:1, the first word is in the absolute state, and vs 1 is an independent clause.

¹ For a helpful discussion of valid hermeneutics in regard to Gen 1–2, see Todd S. Beall, “Contemporary Hermeneutical Approaches to Genesis 1–11,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, eds. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, 131-62 (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

² So Ibn Ezra (d. 1167). According to him, Gen 1:1 was the protasis (“When God began to create ...”) and Gen 1:2 was the apodosis (“the earth was ...”).

³ B. K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory,” *BibSac* 132 (Jul-Sep 1975), 223. Waltke quotes Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 92.

⁴ *Ibid.* Related to LXX’s translation, Westermann observed, “An indirect confirmation of this interpretation is seen in Jn 1:1; the sentence Ἐν ἀρχῇ ὁ λόγος, καὶ ... reflects an interpretation which understands Gen 1:1 as a main clause” (Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 94.

The form **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*bʾrēšît*) is found 5x in the MT (cf. Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34).⁵ In Jer, it is used to refer to an event at the beginning of a certain king's reign. It is grammatically indefinite, as Gen 1:1, but yet clearly understood to be definite (in *the* beginning, not *a* beginning). Notice Jer 26:1 (same form) would *not* be indefinite (“in a beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim”). So, this form, **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*bʾrēšît*), can and should certainly be understood as definite in the case of Gen 1:1.

II. Gen 1:1 – “In the beginning God created” - Independent or Dependent Clause?

Having shown that the prepositional phrase **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*bʾrēšît*), “in the beginning,” should be understood as definite despite being indefinite in form, there is also a question of its relation to the following words. Some would see **בְּרֵאשִׁית** as being *in construct* with **בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים**, and thus forming a *dependent clause*. If so, the opening words could be translated “In *a* beginning when God created” or “When God began to create” (the protasis) with the apodosis to the clause coming with either Gen 1:2 or with Gen 1:3 (though most taking this approach opt for the apodosis in verse 3).

The Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra (d. ca. AD 1167) took verse 1 as a dependent clause with the independent clause coming in verse 2. Hence, “When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was *tōhū wābōhū* (תֹהוּ וְבֹהוּ). This view has few adherents today, although a variation of it is reflected in the NRSV translation: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void . . .” Against this is the fact that Gen 1:2 is a circumstantial clause (parenthetical) giving additional background information for understanding verse one or verse three, and thus verse one or three must be the main clause.

On the other hand, the Jewish commentator Rashi took verse 2 as parenthetical, with the independent clause (the apodosis) coming in verse 3. Hence, “When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth being . . . , God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” This view has been favored more recently by Skinner (ICC, 1930) and Speiser (Anchor, 1969).

There are problems, however, with both of these views which construe Gen 1:1 as a dependent clause. First, we only have **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*bʾrēšît*) in four other places (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34), and in these cases the verse is not in construct in respect to the verb. Second, if the author had wished to express verse one as a dependent clause, he could have used an infinitive construction, as he did in Gen 2:4 with **בְּהִבְרֵאֵם** (*bʾhibbārʾām*):

⁵ Of these verses in Jeremiah, it is Jer 28:1 that injects some confusion in our study, since the MT seems to indicate that it was both “in the beginning” and “in the fourth year” of the reign of Zedekiah. However, there is a text critical problem with this verse (as well as in Jer 27:1). The LXX for 28:1 does not have the words “in the beginning.” Rather: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ ἔτει Σεδεκία βασιλεύος Ιουδα, “And it came about in the fourth year of Zedekiah king of Judah” See the NET Bible tc for further discussion. It would be hard to argue from this one verse in Jeremiah—given its controversial nature—that **בְּרֵאשִׁית** need not be an absolute beginning in Gen 1:1. Cf. J. A. Thompson (*Jeremiah*, NICOT, 537) who omits the words “in the beginning” from his translation of Jer 28:1: “In that same year, in the fourth year of Zedekiah king of Judah” He notes that the words *in that same year* are correct since the incident of ch. 28 took place shortly after that of ch. 27. Jeremiah was still wearing the yoke (vv. 10-11).

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם

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

In conclusion, Genesis 1:1 should be regarded as an independent main clause. This is how most modern commentators understand it, and this is how it is translated by the NASB, NET, NIV, NKJV, ESV and NLT.

III. Gen 1:1 – “the heavens and the earth” - A First Act or A Summary Statement (or Title)?

The traditional view is that Gen 1:1 is God’s first step of the six-day creation account. Some would argue, however, that Gen 1:1 is not a statement of God’s first creative act but rather a *summary* of the remaining pericope (Gen 1:2–2:3) or a title for the creation week. Wenham (12) mentions a few of the advocates of this view: Driver, Gunkel, Procksch, Zimmerli, von Rad, Eichrodt, Cassuto, Schmidt, Westermann, Beauchamp, and Steck.⁶ Also arguing for the summary statement view but as an evangelical scholar is Bruce Waltke.⁷ He does view Gen 1:1 as an independent main clause, but he regards “the heavens and the earth” as a merism indicating the total *cosmos*. One argument for his view that Gen 1:1 is a summary for what follows is the similarity of Gen 1:1 with the concluding statement after the days of creation in Gen 2:1:

Gen 1:1 - “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Gen 2:1 - “Thus the heavens and the earth were created.”

So Waltke would see Gen 1:1 as simply a summary statement for God’s activity recorded in Gen 1:3-31. Gen 1:2, then, is a parenthetical statement (circumstantial clause) informing the reader of the condition of the chaotic earth at the time God began His creative work recorded in Gen 1:3-31. If Waltke is correct, this implies (very significantly) that “the earth” mentioned at the beginning of Gen 1:2 was already in existence before the creation week began. [He does not take the creation week to be a literal six-days, though some advocates of the summary view do]. Furthermore, he relies on Isa 45:18 (“God ... did not create it a waste place” [לֹא־תָהִי בְרֵאֵת]), using the same word תֹהוּ (tōhū) found in Gen 1:2, to argue that the condition of the earth in Gen 1:2 was *not* the result of God’s handiwork but presumably as a result of judgment. His point is that the “earth” (albeit in a primitive state) existed for an undefined amount of time before the creation week began, i.e., the earth was already here. This conclusion, together with the fact that he does not take the six days as literal 24-hour days, allows him to reason that the earth as well as God’s creative work in Gen 1 could have come about over a very long period, possibly even millions or billions of years (although he does not put a number on it).

Waltke would further support his theory by appealing to the similarity of the way the first literary unit (Gen 1:1-2:3) begins with the way the second literary unit (Gen 2:4ff) does. They have a very similar syntax:

⁶ The notion that Gen 1:1 is a summary statement has been widely held among other scholars. See Gerhard F. Hasel, “Recent Translations of Genesis 1:1: A Critical Look,” *The Bible Translator* 22 (1971), 164.

⁷ B. K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory,” *BibSac* 132 (Jul-Sep 1975), 216-28; and *Genesis; A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, 2001), 58-59.

Gen 1:1-3

1. *Introductory summary statement:*

“In the beginning God created the cosmos” (1:1).

2. *Circumstantial clause* of the pattern *waw* + noun + verb (היה) describing the negative state before creation:

“Now the earth was devoid of form ...” (1:2).

3. *Main clause* of the pattern *waw* consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation:

“And God said ...” (1:3).

Gen 2:4-7

1. *Introductory summary statement:*

“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created ...” (2:4).

2. *Circumstantial clause* of the pattern *waw* + noun + verb (היה) describing a negative state before creation:

“Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth ...” (2:5-6).

3. *Main clause* of the pattern *waw* consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation:

“Then the Lord God formed man ...” (2:7).

In my response section (below), I will challenge the thesis that Gen 1:1 and 2:4 represent a “summary statement.”

A. A Response to the “Summary View” of Gen 1:1

1. Do the words “the heavens and the earth” in Gen 1:1 and 2:1 form *bookends* representing all God’s work during the creation week?

A closer examination shows that Gen 2:1 is not an exact reiteration of Gen 1:1. Rather, Gen 2:1 states, “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.” If “the heavens and the earth” represent *everything* God created, why did the author add “and all their hosts”? And what did he mean by “all their hosts” (כָּל־שָׂבָאִים, *kol-šābā’ām*). The noun “host” (שָׂבָא, *šābā’*) has a range of meanings, at least seven different nuances according to *BDB* (838-39). But of these, only three would be relevant options in the case of Gen 2:1: (1) very commonly, the created hosts in the heavens, i.e., the sun, moon, and stars, *BDB* 1c (e.g., Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16); (2) a host of angelic beings, *BDB* 1b (1 Kgs 22:19; Ps 103:21); and (3) supposedly “the entire creation,” but *BDB* 1d only lists Gen 2:1 in this category. The rarity of the third option casts suspicion on its validity, and the fact that the creation of angels is not mentioned in Gen 1 suggests that the second option is doubtful. So probably the author means that God created the heavens and the earth *as well as* all the heavenly objects beyond earth’s atmosphere. Even though the creation of the sun, moon and stars had already been mentioned in Gen 1:14-16, the author wanted to call special attention to the creation of all the heavenly objects.⁸ His reason for doing so is that these would become the objects of worship by numerous pagan civilizations. Israel was to know that what the pagans worshiped, the God of the Bible created.

Furthermore, Gen 1:1 and 2:1 aren’t really saying the same thing. Gen 1:1 informs us that God created the heavens and the earth, whereas Gen 2:1 teaches us that God took that further: *He completed them* (וַיִּכְלֶם). The verb כָּלָה (*kālā*) means to “complete, bring to an end, finish a thing, task, work, etc.” (*BDB* 478). The use of this verb in 1 Kgs 6:9 (Solomon’s construction of the temple) provides a helpful illustration: “So he built the house and finished it (וַיִּכְלֶה); and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar.” The emphasis is upon what Solomon did to bring the temple to completion. Similarly, Gen 1:1 informs us that God created the heavens and the earth (i.e., their initial but incomplete form), and Gen 2:1 tells us that by virtue of what He did during the creation week, *He completed them*.

2. Is the expression “the heavens and the earth” a technical expression for the total cosmos (i.e., a merism for everything God created)?

The terms “heavens” and “earth” are used in the same verse 180 times, and in 109 of these cases, they occur within three words of one another. In some cases, the combination “heavens and earth” does seem to indicate the totality of creation.⁹ Exod 31:17 would be a good example of this: “It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.” Jer 32:17 is another good example: “Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.” The parallel

⁸ This conclusion is supported by the LXX’s translation of Gen 2:1 (“all their hosts”) as πᾶς ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν, in light of how κόσμος is used elsewhere in Deut 4:19 and 17:3 for the objects in the heavenlies.

⁹ Verses that may indicate the totality of creation are Gen 14:19, 22; 24:3; Exod 31:17; Deut 30:19; 31:28; 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16; Isa 65:17; Jer 32:17; Joel 4:16; Ps 89:12; Ps 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; and 2 Chron 2:11.

line in Ps 89:10 reinforces the idea that the combination refers to everything: “The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all it contains, You have founded them.”

Yet there are also a number of cases where the combination does not seem to indicate the totality of creation, because the author will mention additional created elements beyond “the heavens and the earth.” We have already seen this in the case of Gen 2:1 in which the author added “and all their hosts” to “the heavens and the earth.” Another example is Exod 20:11, “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.”¹⁰ If “the heavens and the earth” are the totality of creation, what need was there for adding “the sea and all that is in them”? Similar to this is Neh 9:6, “You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You.” Finally, notice Jer 23:24, “‘Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?’ declares the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’ declares the LORD.”

A survey of the occurrences of the combination “the heavens and the earth” in the OT reveals that sometimes it does mean *God’s total creation*, but in other cases it does not. So, the usage in Gen 1:1 and 2:1, 4 must be evaluated on the basis of its own context. Yet there are several arguments why “the heavens and the earth” in Gen 1:1 is not a merism for the totality of creation.

(1) If “the heavens and the earth” supposedly represents the total cosmos in Gen 1:1, we might expect that the LXX would translate this by the Greek word “cosmos” (κόσμος).¹¹ Instead, it translated the phrase quite literally: τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, “the heavens and the earth.” The LXX did use the term cosmos later in this section at Gen 2:1, not for “the heavens and the earth” but for “all their hosts” (παῖς ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν). Since the LXX also uses κόσμος for the heavenly objects in Deut 4:19 and 17:3, this is probably how they understood it in Gen 2:1.

(2) Regarding Waltke’s suggested parallelism of Gen 1:1-3 and Gen 2:4-7, I would challenge his contention that Gen 1:1 and 2:4 each begin with a “summary statement.” It would be more accurate to identify these as “introductory statements,” i.e., they are not really summarizing what follows. Just because they precede a *waw*-disjunctive statement (in these cases, episode initial) does not mean Gen 1:1 and 2:4 are summaries. I would contend that Gen 2:4 is not really a summary of what follows. Rather, being a “toledot” statement (תּוֹלְדוֹת, *tōlêdôt*), Gen 2:4 simply introduces the new section without summarizing what follows.¹² We have a similar structure at the toledot section of Gen 37:2. In that case, the first statement is not a summary, since the following episode is not about Jacob but rather Joseph. These toledot statements play a unique role in Genesis, and thus the toledot appearing in Gen 2:4 does not demonstrate that Gen 1:1 is a summary of

¹⁰ Similar verses which add elements of creation are Jer 51:48; Hag 2:6; Ps 69:34; 146:6; and Neh 9:6.

¹¹ Waltke argued for the understanding “cosmos” based on the fact that Wisdom of Solomon 1:14 referred to Gen 1:1 as *ho kosmos* (“the world”). But as stated above, the LXX itself (which ought to carry more weight) did not.

¹² The word תּוֹלְדוֹת (*tōlêdôt*), derived from the verb יָלַד (*yālaḏ*) meaning “to bear, give birth to,” has traditionally been translated as “These are *the generations* of” (KJV) or more recently “This is the account of” (NASB, NIV, NET). The point, however, is to explain what became of each preceding unit (what resulted from it).

what follows. Rather the word *tôl^odôt* in Gen 2:4 serves to explain what became of God's original creation described in Gen 1:1-2:3. Commenting on Gen 2:4, Allen Ross explains:

This passage is the first part of the *tôl^edôt* of the heavens and earth, which runs through chapter 4. This first *tôl^edôt* traces what became of the universe God had so marvelously created: it was cursed through disobedience, so that deterioration and decay spread rapidly throughout the human race.¹³

B. Conclusion about the Summary View of Gen 1:1

The arguments offered in defense of the summary view of Gen 1:1 are not as convincing as they might at first appear (as shown above).¹⁴ Furthermore, Gen 1:1 does not *summarize* all of God's activity in the remainder of the chapter. Rather, Gen 1:1 is *introductory*, both to the chapter and to the Bible as a whole. Logically it is fitting that mankind would be given some understanding of "the beginning." If Waltke were correct in his thesis, Genesis 1 would not be about the absolute beginning but only a relative beginning. For him, the earth was already here in a primitive state before the creation week recorded in Genesis 1. Yet there are a number of verses, both in the OT and in the NT, that suggest that Genesis 1 is an absolute beginning. First and foremost is John 1:1-3:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John's opening words, "in the beginning," are an obvious allusion to Gen 1:1. But John is talking about *all things that have come into being*, and he attributes this to Jesus' role in creation.

In Luke 11:49-51, Luke associates the blood of Abel with "the foundation of the world" (καταβολῆς κόσμου). But this expression (used 18x in the NT) is consistently used in the NT of the very beginning (e.g., Jn 17:24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3). Christ Himself, in arguing against divorce, said, "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female" (Mk 10:6). In speaking of "the beginning of creation" (ἀρχῆς κτίσεως), He used the same word ἀρχή for "beginning" as the LXX did in Gen 1:1. According to Jesus, then, Gen 1:1 is not simply *a beginning* but "the beginning of creation."¹⁵ Finally, we have the elaboration on the Genesis 1 creation account in Prov 8:22-31 which teaches us that God possessed "wisdom" before making the earth and establishing the heavens, but the earth and heavens are not considered as a summary but part of the things God created in the six-day creation of Genesis 1. God did this "at the beginning of His way" (רֵאשִׁית דְּרַגְתּוֹ, *rē'shīt darkô*).

¹³ Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing; A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 117. See his extended discussion of *tôl^edôt* and the role these play in the literary structure of Genesis on pages 69-74 of this same work.

¹⁴ For a case against the "summary statement" view, see Anton Pearson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:1-3," *Bethel Seminary Quarterly* 2 (1953), 14-33.

¹⁵ Since ἀρχή occurs in a preposition phrase (ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως), it does not have to have the article to be considered definite (cf. Mk 13:19 and 2 Pet 3:4). Christ also spoke in Jn 8:44 of Satan being a murderer "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς).

If Gen 1:1 is not a summary of the Genesis 1 creation account, what then is it saying about “the heavens and the earth”? The best way to understand this is to see this as God’s first act, i.e., He creates the heavens (the heavenly realm beyond the earth) in which He will later place the sun, moon and stars on day four. He also creates the earth in its primitive form, a watery sluggish mass that has not yet been given its final form. Otherwise, we would be suddenly introduced to the earth in verse two with no explanation as to how it got there or why it was in the condition it was. But if verse one tells us of earth’s creation, then verse two informs us of its initial condition, namely, that it was not yet suitable for man’s habitation. Everything else in the remainder of the chapter will move toward preparing earth for man to dwell on and then climaxing with the creation of the man and woman, the first human beings.

IV. Gen 1:2 – “Now the earth was *tōhû wābōhû* (תְּהוֹ וְבֹהוּ)

Two key questions immediately emerge in verse two affecting our understanding of the creation account. First, is there a gap of time between verse one and verse two? Second, what is the meaning of the words *tōhû wābōhû* (תְּהוֹ וְבֹהוּ), translated by the KJV as “without form and void.”

A. *The Gap Theory: Is There a Gap of Time Preceding Genesis 1:2?*

In the late 1700’s, scientists working in the field of geology began to claim that geological evidence supported the theory that earth’s history was much longer than a few thousand years (contra the 17th century Ussher chronology). Consequently, in the 1800’s, some biblical scholars responded with the teaching of “the gap theory of Genesis 1:1-2” (or gap creationism) that would accommodate the new geological thinking. According to this theory, there was a *gap of time* of unknown duration between verse one and verse 2 that would supposedly allow for the geological ages (though they still held to the creation days as literal 24-hour days). As early as 1814 this suggestion had been made by Thomas Chalmers, a Presbyterian pastor.¹⁶ George Pember, writing in 1876, furthered the teaching of “gap creationism.”¹⁷ *The Scofield Reference Bible* [1917] helped it attain even greater popularity, when a “second creative act” was prominently discussed in the reference notes.¹⁸

Two primary points have been set forth in defense of this theory. First, the adherents of gap creationism argue that the verb הָיָה (hāy³tā) in the opening clause of Gen 1:2 is better translated “had become” (pluperfect form) rather than “was.” According to this understanding, God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, but they *had become* *tōhû wābōhû*. Second, they argue that the words *tōhû wābōhû* imply an imperfect state that could not be the

¹⁶ Thomas Chalmers, “Remarks on Cuvier’s Theory of the Earth,” *The Christian Instructor* [1814]; reprinted in *The Works of Thomas Chalmers*, vol. 12 [Glasgow: William Collins, n.d.], 347–72. This was a review of Georges Cuvier, *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, trans. Robert Kerr [Edinburgh, 1813].

¹⁷ George H. Pember, *Earth’s Earliest Ages, and Their Connection with Modern Spiritualism and Theosophy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876).

¹⁸ Other contemporary defenders of gap creationism were Arthur C. Custance, *Without Form and Void* (Brockville, Ontario: n.p., 1970); and Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament; Volume 1, Genesis—Song of Solomon* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 5.

result of God’s creative work (this is often attributed to a judgment by God on the universe as a result of Satan’s rebellion and expulsion from heaven).

In response to the second defense, there is no necessary reason for believing that the state of *tōhū wābōhū* means a catastrophic situation brought on by judgment.¹⁹ [See my discussion of *tōhū wābōhū* in the following pages]. This has been carefully substantiated by Mark Rooker in his articles for *Bibliotheca Sacra*.²⁰

As for the argument based on the verb הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Gen 1:2, the evidence is strongly against translating this “had become.” Syntactically, the opening clause of verse two (וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְתֵהָ תֵהוֹ (וְנֹבְהוּ)) does not represent subsequent action to that in verse one. Rather, this is a parenthetical disjunctive clause (a type of circumstantial clause), providing initial information to the reader before the narration of the action beginning in verse three. It is better translated “Now the earth was” (so NIV and the NET), telling us the condition of the earth at the time that God commanded light in verse three.

The verb הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Gen 1:2 (here in the qal perfect, 3-f-s), is the Hebrew equative verb, normally translated “is, was.” In some cases, this verb may legitimately be translated “become, became” as in Gen 19:26:

וַתִּבֶּט אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתִּהְיֶינָה נְצִיב מֶלַח:

“But his wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.”

When it has the meaning “become, became,” it typically occurs in a waw-consecutive clause as in the example above.²¹ In every case where הָיָה (*hāyâ*) occurs in a disjunctive parenthetical clause, however, it consistently takes the simple meaning “was, were,” not “become, became, had become.”²² This is to be expected, because by its very nature, the role of a disjunctive

¹⁹ For a refutation of the Gap Theory, see Weston W. Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled: A Critique of the Gap Theory* (1976; repr. Collinsville, IL: Burgener Enterprises, 2000).

²⁰ Mark Rooker, “Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1,” *BibSac* 149:595 (Jul-Sep 1992): 316-23; and Part 2 in *BibSac* 149:596 (Oct-Dec 1992): 411-27.

²¹ Numerous examples can be found in which הָיָה (*hāyâ*) means “become, became,” but these are almost always found in a waw-consecutive clause (not a disjunctive parenthetical clause). See Gen 2:7, 10; 20:12; 39:2; 49:15; Exod 4:3; 7:10; Num 11:1; Deut 26:5; Josh 16:10; 1 Sam 25:37; 2 Sam 8:14; Hos 7:11; Zeph 1:13; Ezek 17:6. There are a few cases where הָיָה (*hāyâ*) can mean “become, became” without being in a waw-consecutive clause (see Job 16:8; Isa 1:22; Ezek 19:3), but these are all in poetic passages (and not disjunctive clauses). The NIV (contra most Engl translations) translates הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Gen 3:20 (“she would become”), but this is in a causal clause following the particle כִּי. הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Gen 36:7 could be translated “had become” (so NASB), but like Gen 3:20, this occurs in a causal clause following the particle כִּי. Most Engl versions simply translate it “were.” The imperfect form יִהְיֶה in Gen 48:19 could be translated “will become,” but this is in *reported speech*.

²² Examples of הָיָה (*hāyâ*) occurring in a disjunctive parenthetical clause are: Gen 2:5; 3:1; 29:17; 36:14; Judg 8:11b; Jon 3:3; and Zech 3:3. When verbs other than הָיָה (*hāyâ*) occur in a disjunctive parenthetical clause, the *perfect stem* (*qatal*) is simply translated as past tense (e.g., Gen 4:1; 16:1; 21:1), or if continual action in the past is intended, a participle form of the verb will be used (e.g., Gen 13:7; 1 Sam 1:9).

parenthetical clause is not to advance the narrative sequence of action but to interrupt the narration to supply information of something's state of existence. Hence, it has a descriptive function (even if this occurs at the beginning of a paragraph to initiate the story). Lambdin speaks of this as the “*explanatory or parenthetical use*, where disjunctive clauses break into the main narrative to supply information relevant to or necessary for the narrative.”²³ A good example of this is Gen 3:1:

וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any living creature of the field.”

In conclusion, the gap creationism theory of Genesis 1:2 is incorrect. The initial clause is a disjunctive parenthetical clause that does not advance the action in regard to verse one, but rather interrupts the narration to supply essential information to the reader of earth's condition as initially created and before God develops it to be inhabited by man.

B. What is the meaning of the words *tōhū wābōhū* (תֹהוּ וְבֹהוּ)?

Let's begin by looking at some of the mainline translations:

NKJV - “The earth was without form, and void.” [so ESV]

NASB - “The earth was formless and void.”

NIV - “Now the earth was formless and empty.”

NRSV - “the earth was a formless void . . .”

NET - “Now the earth was without shape and empty.”

Although the translations do not differ that greatly, it is not altogether clear what this implies about the earth. The crucial question is this: is this simply a primitive incomplete form of the earth—a primordial state—as it came from God's hand (the traditional view), or is this indicative of an imperfect state resulting from a catastrophe or judgment? Both the summary view of Gen 1:1 and the gap theory of Gen 1:1-2 assume the latter.

Waltke (who takes the summary view of Gen 1:1) argues on the basis of how these terms are used in Isa 45:18 that God did not create the earth *tōhū wābōhū*. To restate his view, Gen 1:1 is a summary of the chapter, not a first stage of creation. This is followed by a description in Gen 1:2 of the condition of the earth at the time of the six-day creation which begins with Gen 1:3. Also, there is an indefinite amount of time between verse one and verse two, and earth's condition in verse two is one of chaos, a result of God's judgment of the earth. Hence, he refers to his view as “the precreation chaos theory.”²⁴

Yet the idea that *tōhū wābōhū* is indicative of judgment rather than simply being the initial state of God's creative work does not hold up to close scrutiny.

²³ Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1971), 164. Cf. Waltke and O'Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §39.2.3c (pp 651-52).

²⁴ For details, see B. K. Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3: Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory,” *BibSac* 132 (Jul-Sep 1975), 216-28. Allen P. Ross follows the same view as Waltke in *Creation & Blessing*, 105-07.

The terms are admittedly rare, but the same combination is used elsewhere in Jer 4:23 and Isa 34:11 (the only other verses in the OT where **בְּהוּ** [*bōhû*] is found).

- 1) Jer 4:23 – “I looked on the earth, and behold, it was formless and void (**תְּהוֹ וְבְהוּ**); And to the heavens, and they had no light” (NASB).

The Jeremiah passage is not only a counterpart to Gen 1 but is a reversal of the cosmos back to its original chaotic state. “The point is that the judgment to come on the land takes the form of dismantling or undoing the creation. But it obviously does not follow that the precreative state itself is the result of God's fury.”²⁵ Jer 4:23 cannot be used to prove that Gen 1:2 is the result of God's fury and judgment.

- 2) Isa 34:11 – “But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, and owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line of desolation (**תְּהוֹ**) and the plumb line of emptiness (**בְּהוּ**)” (NASB).

In this case, God's judgment from Isaiah's perspective results in the return of the object of His wrath to its original state prior to its creation, i.e., nothing or an unformed state.

The word *tōhû* is thought to mean “formlessness” or “emptiness” (*BDB* 1062). The use in Isa 45:18 is particularly instructive,

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place [**תְּהוֹ**], but formed it to be inhabited).” [NIV: “he did not create it to be empty”].

Isa 45:18 states that God did not create the earth *tōhû* but *formed it* (**יִצְרָהּ**, *y^oṣārāh*) to be inhabited. Seen here, *tōhû* is opposite of that which has been given *form* and thus suitable for habitation. Regarding **צָרָה** (*yāṣar*), McComiskey states,

The basic meaning of this root is ‘to form,’ ‘to fashion.’ While the word occurs in synonymous parallelism with *bārā* ‘create’ and *āsā* ‘make’ in a number of passages, its primary emphasis is on the shaping or forming of the object involved.²⁶

That is, God did not make the earth to remain an empty mass, void of form and unsuitable for habitation. Yet on the basis of Isa 45:18, Waltke claimed that the state of the earth as described in Gen 1:2 could not be attributable to God, whether *tōhû* be understood as meaning chaos or as simply meaning unformed (i.e., incomplete). Those holding the traditional view would reply that Isa 45:18 was not meant to be taken as an absolute statement. Rather, it is the *purpose* that is in view: God did not create the earth for the purpose of it being *tōhû*, but rather for the purpose that it might be inhabited. Waltke does not feel that this is the best option grammatically (i.e.,

²⁵ Waltke, “The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part II: The Restitution Theory,” *BibSac* 132 (Apr-Jun 1975), 141.

²⁶ Thomas McComiskey, *TWOT*, 396.

the double accusative after verbs of making normally do not have the sense of purpose). However, in defense of the traditional view, two things should be pointed out:

- a) The second accusative (*tōhû*) is preceded by the negative which changes the situation.
- b) The following phrase (the contrast to *tōhû*) is a purpose clause. Notice the NIV translation: "He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited." Hence, the point of Isa 45:18 is not to deny that the earth came from the hand of God *tōhû* in Gen 1:2; it simply makes the point that God did something about it, i.e., He created the earth to be inhabited, not to leave it in a desolate *tōhû* condition. The term *bōhû* (used elsewhere only in Jer 4:23 and Isa 34:11) mean "void, waste, emptiness" (so *TWOT*, 92).²⁷

Finally, someone might object that the text never attributes this state of *tōhû wābōhû* to the Creator. We find no statement that God called forth the state in vs 2 by His Word ("and God said, 'Let there be . . .'"). In response, however, if verses 1-5 all represent the first day, the pronouncement of "good" need not be expected until the completion of all the activity for the day.

C. Conclusions about *tōhû wābōhû*

It must be admitted that the lexical meanings of the terms *tōhû* and *bōhû* are difficult to ascertain, given how infrequently they occur. After a lengthy analysis and discussion M. Görg concluded,

To this day, the proverbial word pair *tōhû wābōhû* has not found a universally satisfactory explanation. . . . This metaphor can already indicate that the two nouns belong to a sphere that stands in opposition to the ordered world.²⁸

He went on to state,

It is therefore still legitimate to assume that the word pair *tōhû wābōhû* is grounded semantically in the characteristic of menacing reality that can be represented by the term "chaos," albeit with reservations. In Jer. 4:23 we may note a cosmic orientation of the expression, which envisions a "chaotic" state of the "earth" like the primordial state described in Gen. 1:2.

Since biblical usage of the terms is scarce and there are no certain cognates in other languages, we have little evidence on which to draw firm conclusions. Some would understand the terms to mean "chaos," a very negative state that would not have come from the hand of God. Others would simply see the terms as implying a more neutral state of being unformed. David Tsumura,

²⁷ *HALOT* (111): "emptiness, wasteness." *NIDOTTE* (1:606): "void, waste." Yet M. Görg (*TDOT*, 15:571) cautions, "Since the *bōhû* never occurs independently but appears only in these three passages, always in association with and preceded by *tōhû*, its semantic contribution can only be to complement the state denoted by *tōhû*."

²⁸ M. Görg, "תֹהוּ *tōhû*," *TDOT* 15:570.

in his thorough investigation, contends that the phrase means a state of "unproductiveness and emptiness."²⁹

If Isa 45:18 is not a denial that God created the earth *tōhû* (as I argued above), and there is no explicit indication in Genesis 1 that the state of the earth in Gen 1:2 came as a result of judgment or other catastrophe, then there really is no reason not to accept the very plausible conclusion that the earth as depicted in Gen 1:2 was simply in a primitive state—an unfinished condition—as initially created by God. This view—the traditional view—has had strong evangelical support from Luther, Calvin, Kiel, Leupold, E. J. Young, C.C. Ryrie and Mark Rooker. This view is also endorsed in *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, 1432c). The idea of *tōhû wābōhû* seems to be that of being “unformed and unfilled.” What God does in the six days of creation will be to give form to the earth in the first three days in preparation for filling it in days 4-6.

V. Gen 2:1 - Does the presence of “darkness” (חֹשֶׁק, *hōšek*) and “the deep” (תְּהוֹמוֹת, *t̄hôm*) in Gen 1:2 Imply Evil or the Result of Judgment?

In the Bible, darkness is symbolic of evil and portrays that sphere where light has not entered to illumine. It is often used in a sense involving "curse" or "judgment" (Job 3:4; Ps 35:6; Isa 47:5; 59:9).

As an opposite to light, it may be considered "evil" (Isa 5:20). Darkness is often associated with God's judgment as in the Day of the Lord (Isa 13:10; Joel 2:31) and the death of Christ (Matt 27:45). In the NT, John uses darkness to represent that which is opposite of God and fellowship with Him (1 Jn 1:5, 6). Finally, we see that darkness will be done away with in the eternal state (Rev 21:25; 22:5). Biblically, darkness is often used to speak of that which is alien to God's holiness.

One might argue that these observations tend to support Waltke's position of the "precreation chaos theory." However, Rooker has sounded a note of caution:

To disassociate the physical darkness mentioned in Genesis 1:2 from God because darkness came to symbolize evil and sin is to confuse the symbol with the thing symbolized. It is like saying yeast is evil because it came to represent spiritual evil.³⁰

Furthermore, elsewhere God takes the responsibility for the creation of "darkness": "The One forming light and creating darkness (וַיְבַרֵא אֱלֹהִים), . . . I am the LORD who does all these" (Isa 45:7). The same logical point of Rooker would apply equally well to the “deep” (תְּהוֹמוֹת, *t̄hôm*).³¹

²⁹ David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 155-56.

³⁰ Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2," 422.

³¹ The word “deep” (תְּהוֹמוֹת, *t̄hôm*) occurs 36 times in the OT. The word normally refers to the *ocean waters* which carry no particular evil connotation. God may use it in executing judgment (e.g., on Tyre, Ezek 26:19), but in and of itself, it is neutral—it is simply water covering the face of the planet (see Gen 7:11; Deut 8:7; 33:13). Furthermore, Ps 104:6 attributes its presence to the hand of God: “You covered it [the earth] with the deep (תְּהוֹמוֹת) as with a garment.” The fact that the LXX translated תְּהוֹמוֹת in Gen 1:2 as “the abyss” (τῆς ἀβύσσου) does not imply evil, since elsewhere in the LXX, the word ἄβυσσος simply designates the seas or oceans in a very neutral way.

VI. The Oddity of Light on Day One, but No Sun and Stars until Day Four

The fact that God created light on Day One but did not create the sun until Day Four is sometimes used as an argument against the literal six-day creation view. Some use this observation to conclude (wrongly) that the six days were never intended to be understood as literal 24-hour days and that they did not happen in the sequence in which they were presented. [This is part of the argumentation of those who embrace the “Framework Hypothesis”]. Those who hold to the traditional view of Genesis believe that there was light before the sun’s creation and suggest several possible explanations for this:

- (1) God could have created a temporary light source to provide the initial light.
- (2) God did not have to create a light *source* for there to be light. Since light is electromagnetic radiation (energy particles being transmitted through space), God could have simply created light falling on the earth. In this case, it had “apparent age” (already reaching the earth, though light travels through space), just as mature trees that God created already appeared to have existed for some time.
- (3) The initial light that earth experienced could have been the glory of God radiating from Himself. In Psalm 104:1-2 (a psalm focusing on the Genesis 1 creation), we read,

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a *tent* curtain.

When we come to end of the Bible, we read the following description of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21:23: “And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb.” Cf. Hab 3:3b-4.

VII. The Meaning of “Day” (יֹמִים, *yôm*) and the Matter of the Day-Age Theory

According to the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1, God created everything in six literal 24-hour days. Some have challenged this understanding of how “day” (יֹמִים, *yôm*) is used in the chapter. Two alternative proposals have been set forth that would supposedly allow for God’s creation to happen over many years—even millions of years:

- (1) The Day-Age View

The word “day” does not mean a literal 24-hour day but a “long age”

- (2) The Intermittent Day-Age View

The word “day” does mean a literal 24-hour day, but there are long periods between each day.

A. *Background and Advocates of the Day-Age Theory*

Following the rise of geology science in the 1700's, some Christians came to accept the fact that creation must go back not thousands of years but millions of years. One way of reconciling this with the Bible was to take a different view of the Hebrew word “*yôm*,” meaning day. One such early advocate was Arnold Guyot (1807-1884), a Swiss-American who ended up teaching at Princeton. Others followed this thesis, noting that there are places in the OT where “*yôm*” can mean a time longer than a 24-hour period, such as the phrase “the day of the Lord” or even the summary statement in Gen 2:4, “the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.”³² They would also point to the statement in 2 Pet 3:8 about one day being like 1000 years with the Lord. In general, advocates of the day-age theory believe in a literal Adam and Eve, and follow the same sequence of creation events as those who take the traditional view. Notable adherents of the day-age theory include William Jennings Bryan (the adversary of evolution at the Scopes Trial), the American Baptist preacher William Bell Riley, Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe, Stephen Meyer (a founder of The Discovery Institute and the director of The Center for Science and Culture), as well as several noted Christian scholars such as Gleason Archer, Walter Kaiser, Millard Erickson, and J. P. Moreland.³³

B. *Problems with the Day-Age Theory*

1. The word *yôm* is used some 2300 times in the OT, and in the vast majority of these instances, the meaning is a literal 24-hour day. Although there are instances where *yôm* means a protracted period longer than this, what is crucial to note is that whenever *yôm* is coupled with a numerical indicator (e.g., the second day, or forty days), it always means a literal 24-hour day. The statement in 2 Pet 3:8 (“with the Lord one day is like a thousand years”) is not meant to teach that God operates by a different kind of day, but to make a point of how patient God is (as the next verse emphasizes).
2. At the end of each day, there is a statement that defines the meaning of *yôm* in this passage: “and there was evening and there was morning, ___ day.”³⁴ This clarifies that *yôm* does not mean an age (millions of years?) or God’s “workdays.” Cf. Exod 20:8-11.
3. If *yôm* in Genesis 1 means a long age rather than a normal day, then plants on Day 3 would not have had sunlight for a long age, since the sun is not created until Day 4.
4. Related to point 2 above, day-age advocates will sometimes respond that Day 4 is not the creation of the luminaries like the sun but rather their unveiling (i.e., they were created before

³² Cf. “the day of my distress” (Gen 35:3); “the day of your gladness” (Num 10:10); “the day of their calamity” (Deut 32:35; similarly 2 Sam 22:19; Job 21:30); “a day of darkness” (Job 15:23); “the day of His anger” (Job 20:28); “the day of trouble” (Ps 20:1); “the day of His wrath” (Ps 110:5); “the day of evil” (Prov 16:4); “the day of prosperity” and “the day of adversity” (Eccl 7:14); “a day of vengeance” (Isa 34:8; 61:2); “a day of salvation” (Is 49:8); “your day of pride” (Ezek 16:56); “the day of small things” (Zech 4:10) and similar such phrases.

³³ Defending this view are Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, “The Day-Age View,” in *The G3N3SIS Debate*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), 123-63 and 189-214.

³⁴ Gen 1:6 has “one day” (יִּוֶם אֶחָד). Note the use of this expression in Gen 27:45; 33:13; and Num 11:19-20 where a literal 24-hour day is clearly in view.

this). This argument, however, does not hold water, because the text of Gen 1:14 uses the language for acts of divine origination: “And God said, ‘Let there be’” (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי).)

5. The first day of creation was discussed by the Jewish rabbis in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Hag.* 12a), and it is clear from this that they understood *yôm* in Genesis 1 as a literal 24-hour day.

6. Ross observes, “from the fourth day on, there are days, years, signs, and seasons, suggesting that the normal system is entirely operative.”³⁵

7. Ross also points out, “if *yôm* refers to an age, then the text would have to allow for a long period of ‘day’ and then a long period of ‘night’—but few would argue for the night as an age.”³⁶

The Intermittent Day-Age View is equally problematic. This view does not rest on exegesis of the text, because there is nothing in the Hebrew text that would suggest a gap of any duration between the days of creation. This is nothing but conjecture. Objection #3 above about plants long before sunlight would also apply here. Finally, this view flies right into the face of Exod 20:11 which clearly states that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them in six days.

VIII. The Question of the Historicity of Adam: Was He the First Human?

BioLogos is one of the primary proponents of *theistic evolution*.³⁷ According to their doctrinal statement, they affirm the following position about the Bible: “We believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God.”³⁸ Yet (inconsistently) they go on to state, “We believe that God created the universe, the earth, and all life over billions of years,” and then affirm that God did this through the process of evolution. This, of course, immediately challenges the authority of Scripture, for Genesis 1 affirms that the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) did not evolve but were created directly by God. By way of contrast, William Barrick points out the conflict of viewpoints when he writes, “The biblical details in the account of God’s creation of both Adam (from dust) and Eve (from Adam’s rib) provide the most blatant inconsistency between the Bible and the theory of the biological evolution of human beings.”³⁹

The question of the historicity of Adam according to contemporary evangelicals was carefully laid out in the Zondervan Counterpoints book, *Four Views on the Historical Adam*.⁴⁰ In this work, four authors lay out four different understandings about Adam:

³⁵ Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 109.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ In addition to materials found on the BioLogos website defending theistic evolution, see also Howard J. Van Till, “The Fully Gifted Creation (‘Theistic Evolution’),” in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, ed. J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds, 159-218 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999). See also the responses to Van Till in the same work by Walter R. Bradley, John Jefferson Davis, J. P. Moreland, and Vern S. Poythress, 219-39.

³⁸ From the BioLogos website, <https://biologos.org/about-us/what-we-believe/>.

³⁹ William D. Barrick, “Old Testament Evidence for a Literal Historical Adam and Eve,” in *Searching for Adam: Genesis & the Truth About Man’s Origin*, ed. Terry Mortenson (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016), 28.

⁴⁰ Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

(1) Denis Lamoureux - No Historical Adam⁴¹

Denis Lamoureux presents the idea that there was no historical Adam, that Genesis 1–11 is not historical, and that theistic evolution is a fact. Yet he claims this doesn't affect the core teachings of the Christian faith. Lamoureux believes that God accommodated His message so that ancient people who did not have access to modern science could communicate the divine revelation of God.

(2) John Walton – “Adam” as an Archetype

For Walton, Genesis 1 does not give scientific information about human origins, and thus Adam and Eve may or may not have been the first humans or the parents of the entire human race. Scripture is mostly concerned with presenting him as an archetype of the human race.

(3) C. John Collins – Affirms an Historical Adam but also the Earth is Billions of Years

According to Collins, there was a literal historical Adam and Eve, but the earth is billions of years old, and evolution may or not be right.⁴²

(4) William Barrick – Adam was a Literal Historical Person

Adam was a literal historical person, through whom sin entered into the world. He highlights how Jesus and Paul shared this belief, and that the doctrines of the fall of humanity, the need for the second Adam (Jesus), the institution of marriage, and the belief in the Bible as the inerrant Word of God would all fall to the ground without an historical Adam.

It is quite unfortunate that the issue of the historicity of Adam would even be a debate today by those claiming to be “evangelicals.” A straight-forward reading of Genesis 1–3 not only affirms this, but it is implied by Jesus Himself in His comments about marriage in “the beginning” (Matt 19:4–6) and confirmed by the Apostle Paul (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45; 1 Tim 2:13). Keathley and Rooker point out the importance of this issue is to biblical theology:

We believe the historicity of Adam and Eve is so important that the matter should serve as a litmus test when evaluating the attempts to integrate a proper understanding of Genesis 1–3 with the latest findings of science. It must be realized that any position which denies that a real fall was experienced by a real couple will have adverse effects on other significant biblical doctrines. . . . we should recognize the consequences of trying to alter doctrines that have solid scriptural footing.⁴³

⁴¹ Also arguing that there was no historical Adam is Scot McKnight, professor of NT at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. See Dennis R. Venema and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome; Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017). Questioning the historicity of Adam is Tremper Longman who concludes that “it is not necessary that Adam be a historical individual” [“What Genesis 1–2 Teaches (and What It Doesn’t),” in *Reading Genesis 1–2; An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013), 122–23].

⁴² See Collins’s further work, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

⁴³ William D. Barrick, “Old Testament Evidence for a Literal Historical Adam and Eve,” 19.

Fortunately, there are some helpful resources supporting the biblical position of Adam as a literal historical person.⁴⁴

IX. Is There a Literary Framework That Serves as a Controlling Hermeneutic?

One popular approach in trying to understand Genesis 1 is what is known as the “Framework View.”⁴⁵ This view is based on the observation that there is a paralleling structure (a framework) between the first three days of creation and the second three. According to Irons, the first triad (Days 1-3) deal with the *creation kingdoms*, while the second triad (Days 4-6) deal with the *creature kings* who exercise dominion over those kingdoms:

<u>Creation kingdoms</u>		<u>Creature kings</u>		
Day 1	Light	Day 4	Luminaries	light + separate darkness
Day 2	Sky	Day 5	Sea creatures	chiasmus
	Seas		Winged creatures	
Day 3	Dry land	Day 6	Land animals	2 creative acts
	Vegetation		Man	close assn of man with vegetation
The Creator King				
Day 7 Sabbath				

A. A Summary of the Framework View

(from the article by Irons and Kline, “The Framework View”):

“The *framework view* holds that the days of Genesis form a figurative framework in which the divine works of creation are narrated in a topical rather than sequential order. This view holds that the picture of God completing His work of creation in six days and

⁴⁴ Terry Mortensen, ed. *Searching for Adam; Genesis & the Truth About Man’s Origin* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016); William VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015); William D. Barrick, “A Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Kenneth D. Keathley and Mark F. Rooker, *40 Questions About Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014); Mark Bailey, “Why Adam Was Real—and Why it Matters,” in *Veritas* 16:1 (Apr 2016), 1-8; Terry Mortenson, “In Defense of the Historical Adam,” 28 July 2015, <https://answersingenesis.org/adam-and-eve/defense-of-historical-adam/>; Simon Turpin, “The Importance of an Historical Adam,” *Answers Research Journal* 6 (2013), 195-209; and Turpin’s response to Scot McKnight, “Eroding the Historical Adam: A Response to *Adam and the Genome*,” 1 June 2017, <https://answersingenesis.org/adam-and-eve/eroding-historical-adam-response-adam-and-genome/>.

⁴⁵ For a defense of the Framework View, see Meredith Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 20:2 (May 1958), 146-57; Kline, “Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony,” in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48 (1996), 2-15 [available online at <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>]; Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, “The Framework View,” in *The G3N3SIS Debate*, ed. David G. Hagopian, 217-56 (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001); Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 53, 56; Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen. 2:5-7 with Implications for Gen. 2:4-25 and Gen. 1:1-2:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (Spring 1998), 2-10, 13-17; Mark Ross, “The Framework Hypothesis: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3,” in *Did God Create in Six Days?* Ed. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. and David W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 122-128. The Framework View is often shared by scholars holding to different views of creation. Hence, Bruck K. Walke, who holds to theistic evolution, also embraces the Framework View (*Genesis*, 56-58, 73-78). Cf. Richard E. Averbeck who takes a modified view (“A Literary Day, Inter-Textual, and Contextual Reading of Genesis 1-2,” in *Reading Genesis 1-2; An Evangelical Conversation*, 31-32).

resting on the seventh was not intended to reveal the sequence or duration of creation, but to proclaim an eschatological theology of creation” (p 16).

The days merely function to set up a literary structure “in which the creative works of God have been narrated in a topical order” (p 219). . . . These are historical events (and Adam was a historical individual) but the events “are narrated in a nonsequential order within the literary structure or framework of a seven-day week” (p 219). . . . “We affirm a historical creation, a historical Adam, and a historical Fall” (p 220). Though denying the biblical sequence, they do admit that man was created last and this was followed by the Sabbath rest (p 221).

The bottom-line of this approach is that the days of Genesis 1 were not meant to be understood as literal 24-hour days. They are simply a *framework* for conveying a theology. The days are arranged *topically*, not chronologically or sequentially.

B. Defense Offered for the Framework View

In defense of understanding the days *figuratively*, Irons states, “. . . the institution of the solar day on the fourth day, after the creation week has already begun, indicates that the days are not to be understood literally as solar days” (219-220). So, Day 4 supposedly returns to the scene of Day 1 to provide a more detailed explanation of how God produced daylight on the earth and separated the light from the darkness. So, Day 1 gives us the results, and Day 4 gives the physical mechanism for how God produced the light. This view of Day 1 and Day 4 is then the key to the whole view: “The temporal recapitulation of Day 1 on Day 4 justifies taking the whole week of seven days as a figurative framework that provides a literary and theological structure for the narrative of the divine work of creation” (230).

A second defense of this view comes from Gen 2:5-6 and the statement “the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth.” Supposedly, then, there were no plants, because there was no rain. But then God set in motion ordinary operations with a raincloud rather than having to resort to “an extraordinary mode of providence during the creation period” (236). Their point is to argue that God created a natural, not a supernatural, provision for the watering. They extrapolate from this that the light of Day 1 is not a supernatural temporary provision but rather a natural one.

A third defense offered for the view is the observation that Day 7 has no concluding statement “and there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day.” It is an *infinitely long and unending day*. From this, they conclude that the seventh day had no end and thus was not a literal day. If the seventh day is then not literal, then neither should the first six days be regarded as literal and sequential.

C. A Refutation of the Framework View

Several responses have been given to refute the Framework View, and the reader is directed to those for a fuller discussion.⁴⁶ As a brief response, the most glaring problem with this is the *hermeneutical* one. Even if there is a certain paralleling of Days 1-3 with Days 4-6, that would

⁴⁶ See the responses to Irons and Kline in *The G3N3SIS Debate*, 257-77. Also, see “Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, eds. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, 211-49 (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

not substantiate the conclusion that these are only literary days, not literal days. There is nothing in the text that affirms (much less *demand*s) that conclusion. Duncan adds,

The framework essay eliminates Days 4-6 by having them refer to Days 1-3. Where is the scriptural clue telling us that Genesis is speaking about three days that are reiterated (but not Days 4-6) followed by a fourth day (but not really the seventh)? The framework interpretation yields a quadrath instead of a Sabbath, for it sees Days 4-6 as recapitulations of Days 1-3, respectively.⁴⁷

A key principle of interpretation is that clearer passages ought to be given more weight over less clear ones. The Framework View simply cannot get around the straight-forward statement in Exod 20:11 and 31:17 that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

As for the statement in Gen 2:5-6 about rain not yet falling, their argument fails on exegetical grounds. The passage is not teaching that there were no plants or that there was no water for the plants. Verse five says, “Now no shrub (רִיֵּשׁ, *śîah*) of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant (עֵשֶׂב, *‘ēseb*) of the field had yet sprouted.” This is not a contradiction with Gen 1:11-12, as though to say that there was no vegetation until after Adam was created. A “shrub” (רִיֵּשׁ, *śîah*) was more of a wild bush that would flourish in wilderness places, needing little water (Gen 21:15; Job 30:7).⁴⁸ There were plants (עֵשֶׂב, *‘ēseb*); they just had not yet sprouted. Furthermore, there was water for these plants. Framework advocates misinterpret verse six (“But an ‘ēḏ (אֵד) used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground”) when they interpret ‘ēḏ as “raincloud.” Although the NASB and ESV (following *BDB*) translated ‘ēḏ (אֵד) as “mist,” *HALOT* (11) gives the meaning “subterranean stream of fresh water, celestial stream.” This meaning is followed by the NET Bible, NIV, and NRSV. Hence, the NIV translates the verse, “streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.” So, there was already water for the vegetation that God had created. The idea that everything had to wait for God to create a raincloud is foreign to this passage.

As for the seventh day, the Sabbath, nothing is said about this being an unending day. That would be nothing more than an assumption that the text does not explicitly endorse. While it is true that there is no statement “and there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day,” the text is not concerned with going on to the next morning (which would be the 8th day). So, there is no need for this statement at the end of the seventh day. While it is true that the motif of God resting on the Sabbath day is treated in Hebrews 4 typologically, it is not the point of the author of Hebrews that the seventh day in Genesis never ended. Rather, he is urging his readers to persevere in faith and faithfulness in the present time, in order that they might enjoy a full

⁴⁷ J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall, *The G3N3SIS Debate*, 266.

⁴⁸ A NET Bible note states, “The first term, רִיֵּשׁ (*siakh*), probably refers to the wild, uncultivated plants (see Gen 21:15; Job 30:4, 7); whereas the second, עֵשֶׂב (*‘esev*), refers to cultivated grains.” For more discussion on this, see Richard Averbeck, “A Literary Day, Inter-Textual, and Contextual Reading of Genesis 1-2,” in *Reading Genesis 1-2; An Evangelical Conversation*, 28-29. He concludes, “The point is this: There were already plants and trees on the earth with all the day 3 varieties (Gen 1:11-13), but no wilderness or weed versus cultivated crop conditions existed” (29).

reward in the “rest” to come, the messianic kingdom of Christ. The Sabbath rest pointed forward to the future rest of Christ’s kingdom.