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Hermeneutical and Exegetical Considerations Guiding the Interpretation of Genesis 1–2

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INTRODUCTION

Genesis 1–2 is undoubtedly one of the most worked-over passages in all of Scripture. Even among evangelicals claiming to hold to a high view of biblical authority, there simply is no consensus as to how these chapters should be read and understood. This author has identified at least ten distinct approaches taken by evangelical scholars in interpreting the creation account of Genesis 1–2. These views are summarized in the chart on the following page, and an appendix at the end of the paper lists key proponents of each position along with representative critiques offered by fellow scholars. Historically, the traditional view has held that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal twenty-four-hour days—not over millions or billions of years—and that Adam and Eve were the first humans, created directly by God on the sixth day. Among evangelical scholars today, however, this traditional understanding has become the minority position. Of the ten views surveyed in this paper, eleven embrace some form of long-age interpretation of earth's history.

How one understands Genesis 1–2 depends on four primary factors: (1) the presuppositions brought to the interpretive task; (2) one's assessment of the literary genre that characterizes Genesis 1–2; (3) the validity of one's hermeneutics and exegesis of the Hebrew text; and (4) the way Genesis 1–2 is viewed in light of the New Testament's use of the passage. If, for example, a person is already convinced that the standard evolutionary account of earth's history is correct—such as the view that the earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old (e.g., Francis Collins of BioLogos)—he may be predisposed to adopt one of the non-literal approaches to Genesis 1–2, often at the expense of careful exegesis.[1] Other presuppositions also influence interpretation. Some argue that humanoid beings with human-like characteristics existed prior to Adam and Eve. Others deny the existence of a literal Adam and Eve altogether, viewing them instead as archetypal or mythological figures. Still others—such as William Lane Craig—reject the historicity of a universal global flood as described in Genesis 6:9–9:29, deeming such an event too extraordinary to have occurred.[2] The reasoning then follows: if the flood account is not literal history, Genesis 1–2 may likewise be understood as nonhistorical.

Questions of literary genre further complicate matters. Several creation views assign a special genre to Genesis 1–11 as a whole, or to chapter 1 in particular, rather than treating the text as straightforward historical narrative. Gordon Wenham, for instance, though not classifying Genesis 1 as Hebrew poetry, describes it as "elevated prose," thereby providing a rationale for employing a distinct hermeneutic in its interpretation.[3] Others contend that because Genesis 1–11 recounts primeval history—earth's origins and the prehistory of the Abrahamic line—it must be interpreted differently from the historical narratives that comprise Genesis 12–50.[4]

In this paper, I will offer a brief defense of the genre of Genesis 1–2 as historical narrative and then clarify several hermeneutical and exegetical considerations that, in my judgment, are essential for a correct interpretation of the text.

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[1] Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 148.

[2] William Lane Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2021), 120-28.

[3] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 10.

[4] So Howard J. Van Till, "The Fully Gifted Creation," in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, ed. J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reynolds (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999), 209-210.

Evangelical Views of the Creation Account in Gen 1–2

Designed by Dr. J. Paul Tanner

More Literal ← → Less Literal

Literal Six-Day View	Gap Theory View	Pre-Creation Chaos View	Promised Land View	Old Earth Views	Frame-work View	Figurative Days Views	Mytho-Historical View	Theistic Evolution View	Cosmic Temple View
Traditional View. God created everything in six consecu-tive, 24-hour days, starting at Gen 1:1. Vs 2 depicts the earth in its initial incomplete stage, before God formed and filled heaven and earth (vv 3ff).	There is a long gap of time (perhaps billions of years) between an original creation in Gen 1:1 and a judged earth depicted in vs 2. This is followed by a new re-creation in six literal days starting at vs 3.	Gen 1:1 is a summary statement for the whole chapter (comp. 2:4). Vs 2 depicts the earth negatively (not by God--something wrong has happened). New creation starts in vs 3 (implies a previous creation).	Gen 1:1 is the creation of the entire universe over millions (perhaps billions) of years. Vs 3ff describes God's work to prepare the Promised Land (= Garden of Eden), for Israel. [Heb word *'erets* can mean earth or land].	Millions of years were involved in the creation week. **Day-Age View** Each Day = millions of years (not 24 hr days). **Intermittent-Day Age View** A day =24 hrs, but millions of years between each day. R. C. Newman John C. Lennox	Relies on literary analysis to take the days or the week figuratively. Based on an assumption of the paralleling of days 1-3 with days 4-6. Hence, days are not 24 hr days or sequential but used to convey theology.	Accepts the Framework Structure. **Literary Days View** The days are not 24 hr days, but only used as a literary device to convey the sequence God went through. **Analogical Days View** These are God's workdays; only an analogy to man's.	Gen 1–11 is cast in figurative language, conveying certain historical details (e.g., real people) through use of an ANE myth genre (unhistoric elements) to communicate theological truths and etiologies. Gen 1-2 need not be read literalistically.	God used natural processes, namely evolution, to create everything (e.g., stars, earth, plants, animals and man) over billions of years. Many (not all) see Genesis as allegorical and deny a historical Adam & Eve.	Gen 1–2 is not about material creation, but God giving function to pre-existing things. Cosmic space is prepared as His temple within which He will rule. The view relies heavily on comparison to ANE Lit.
Henry Morris T. Mortenson Todd Beall Wm. Barrick Doug. F. Kelly Marcus Ross Ans in Genesis Inst. Creation R.	George Pember Harry Rimmer R. A. Torrey Arthur Custance Scofield Ref. Bible	Bruce K. Waltke Allen P. Ross David M. Fouts	John H. Sailhamer	**Day-Age View** Gleason Archer Walter Kaiser Millard Erickson J.P. Moreland Reasons to Believe (Hugh Ross)	Meredith Kline Henri Blocher Lee Irons Bruce K. Waltke	**Literary Days View** Richard E. Averbeck **Analogical Days View** C. John Collins	William Lane Craig	Francis Collins Peter Enns Tr. Longman N. T. Wright How. J. Van Till Bruce K. Waltke BioLogos Organ.	John H. Walton

THE LITERARY GENRE OF GENESIS 1–2 AS HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Overall Structure of the Book

Many have noted that the book of Genesis is unified by a distinctive literary feature. Beginning in Genesis 2:4 we read, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created," (אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבָּרְאָם). The older KJV rendered this phrase as "These are the generations," using the word *generations* to translate the Hebrew term *tôlᵉḏôt* (תּוֹלְדוֹת). This word appears ten times throughout Genesis, thereby indicating how the author organized his material, with each *tôlᵉḏôt* introducing a new section.

1.	Creation Account		1:1–2:3
2.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of the heavens & earth	2:4–4:26
3.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Adam	5:1–6:8
4.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Noah	6:9–9:29
5.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Shem, Ham, Japhet	10:1–11:9
6.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Shem	11:10-26
7.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Terah	11:27–25:11
8.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Ishmael	25:12-18
9.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Isaac	25:19–35:29
10.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Esau	36:1–37:1
11.	*tôlᵉḏôt*	of Jacob	37:2–50:26

There is a reason why the word does not appear at the beginning of chapter one. [We must not think Genesis 1:1–2:3 stands outside this structuring]. The word *tôlᵉḏôt* (hereafter simply *tôledôt*) is derived from the Hebrew verb *yālaḏ*, meaning "to bear, bring forth, give birth to." Within Genesis, the word *tôledôt* functions to link one major unit of material to the next, effectively signaling, "this is what became of the preceding," or "this is what resulted from what came before." The first such heading appears in Genesis 2:4, indicating that the material in 2:4–4:26 explains what became of the previous section (Gen 1:1–2:3). What became of God's perfect creation in Gen 1:1–2:3 is that despite man being blessed in the Garden of Eden with a wife to complement him in the task of ruling over God's creation, the couple disobeyed God, became sinners, and quickly passed sin to their descendants—resulting in murder and escalating rebellion. These repeated *tôledôt* sections—five in chapters 1:1–11:26 and five in chapters 11:27–50:26—provide the structural backbone of the book, and Gen 1:1–2:3 is fully integrated into this literary scheme. The reason *tôledôt* does not appear at the beginning of chapter 1 is that Genesis 1 records the absolute beginning of the material world; it does not "result from" anything prior. The *tôledôt formula*, by its very nature, cannot introduce a section that has no antecedent.

An important implication of this structural observation is that Genesis 1–11 should not be treated as a different literary genre from Genesis 12–50. If the latter is universally recognized as historical narrative—and most scholars readily acknowledge that it is—then we should expect Genesis 1–11 to function as historical narrative as well, and, in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, interpret it in a straightforward, literal manner. Of course, historical narrative can contain occasional poetic elements or distinctive stylistic features. I have documented this carefully in my PhD dissertation entitled "Textual Patterning in Biblical Hebrew

Narrative."[5] The book of Judges, for example, exhibits a deliberate paralleling structure that highlights the Gideon narrative as the literary and theological center, and the Gideon account itself is crafted with a carefully balanced symmetry of corresponding elements that reinforces its theological message.[6]

In defending what he terms a mytho-historical approach to Genesis 1–11, William Lane Craig acknowledges the *tôledôt* structural formula of Genesis but dismisses its significance for identifying the genre of these chapters.[7] Part of his reasoning is that the *tôledôt* sections vary in length, with some being considerably shorter than others.[8] Yet this objection fails to recognize the purpose the author intends by these headings. For example, Genesis 25:12–18—the *tôledôt* of Ishmael—is admittedly brief, but its placement immediately after the lengthy *tôledôt* of Abraham (Gen 11:27–25:11) is deliberate. It highlights a contrast: God's program of salvation history will proceed through the line of Isaac, not Ishmael. Similarly, the tôledôt of Esau (Gen 36:1–37:1) follows the tôledôt of Isaac to show that God's redemptive purposes will advance through Jacob, not Esau. The final tôledôt—that of Jacob in Genesis 37:2–50:26—concludes the book by demonstrating how the Abrahamic line of blessing is preserved through Joseph, even as the nation is displaced to Egypt in an early exile brought about by divine discipline for their ungodly conduct and actions. Thus, the *tôledôt* structure of Genesis cannot be dismissed lightly. It provides a coherent literary framework for the entire book and strongly supports reading Genesis 1:1–2:3 as historical narrative rather than mytho-history.

Genesis 1–2 Has the Characteristics of Historical Narrative

The primary hallmark of Hebrew historical narrative is the predominance of the *waw*-consecutive verbal sequence—and that is precisely what we find throughout Genesis 1 and 2.

As an example, we have a case of the *waw*-consecutive on the verb in Gen 1:3:

וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֖ים יְהִ֣י אֹ֑ור וַיְהִי־אֹֽור׃ — *waw*-consecutive

It is worth noting that Genesis 1 contains fifty *waw*-consecutive forms, which amount to 1.6 per verse. That is more than all but three of the first twenty chapters of Genesis.

If Genesis 1–2 was representative of Hebrew poetry, a figurative interpretation might be warranted. However, the primary hallmark of Hebrew poetry—namely, parallelism—is conspicuously absent from these chapters. A classic example of parallelism appears in Psalm 19:1, where the second line restates and intensifies the first:

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

This is not to suggest, however, that Genesis 1:1–2:3 contains no poetic touches. It does—though they are quite rare—and a good example appears in the chiastic arrangement of terms in Genesis 2:23:

[5] J. Paul Tanner, "Textual Patterning in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Case Study in Judges 6–8" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1990).

[6] J. Paul Tanner, "The Gideon Narrative as the Focal Point of Judges," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:594 (Apr-Jun 1992): 146-61.

[7] William L. Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam; A Biblical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2021), 132-36.

[8] Ibid., 135.



A similar poetic paralleling of terms appears in Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:29 —a passage that is unmistakably historical narrative. The point is that occasional poetic elements within narrative material are not unusual, nor do they alter the genre of the text. Their presence does not warrant treating the account as figurative or non-literal. Rather, such stylistic touches simply enrich the narrative without changing the fact that it is intended to be understood in a straightforward, literal manner.

The Genealogical-Historical Framework of Genesis 1–11

Clearly, the central focus of the book of Genesis is the covenant program God initiated with Abraham and how that covenant was transmitted through successive generations until the nation emerged as twelve tribes corresponding to the twelve sons of Jacob. One of the purposes of Genesis 1–11, therefore, is to connect Abraham's lineage all the way back to Adam—the first man—through whom God began His program of blessing. This connection is established in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, which presume that every ancestor listed is a real historical figure. Significantly, Genesis 5:1 begins the entire genealogical chain with Adam, explicitly stating that Adam fathered Seth. In the New Testament, Luke likewise traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam, concluding with the words, "the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). Luke's formulation underscores that Adam was not born of any prior human being; he was created directly by God. For this reason, Paul can refer to Adam as "the first man" (1 Cor 15:45).

The implication is that Genesis presents a continuous line of literal historical figures extending all the way back to Genesis 1, which casts serious doubt on the claim that the narratives upon which these genealogies depend are "mytho-history." Moreover, if Adam initiates the genealogical thread running throughout Genesis 1–11—and every subsequent figure in that thread is understood as a literal human—then Adam himself must be a real historical person, not merely an "archetype," as Walton has suggested.[9] This conclusion is further reinforced by the doctrine of original sin: Paul's argument in Romans 5:12–21 depends on Adam being the first human through whom sin entered the world and spread to all mankind (cf. 1 Cor 15:21–22).

Regarding the genealogical-historical framework of Genesis 1–11, Hoffmeier rightly concludes:

> the 'family history' structuring of the book indicates that the narratives should be understood as historical, focusing on the origins of Israel back to Adam and Eve, the first human couple and parents of all humanity. The use of a genealogical-historical framework for Genesis points the reader toward how the book as a whole should be understood, namely, the narratives are dealing with real events involving real figures—and this includes Genesis 1–11.[10]

Craig is quite aware of the genealogies, but rather quickly dismisses the implications they carry for chapters 1–11 being historical narrative. While accepting that the author presents the genealogies as historically true, Craig

[9] So John H. Walton, "Reading Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology," in *Reading Genesis 1-2; An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013), 165-67.

[10] James K. Hoffmeier, "Genesis 1–11 as History and Theology," in *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?*, ed. C. Halton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 32.

writes, "What makes Gen 1–11 different is that the genealogies move seamlessly into the historical period of the patriarchs, where the historical interest is obvious and not in dispute."[11]

But we must ask an important question: why does the historical interest of Genesis become more obvious—and virtually undisputed—beginning with the *tôledôt* of Terah and the account of Abraham? At this point Craig introduces several lines of reasoning to support his classification of Genesis 1–11 as "mytho-history."[12] Two of his more prominent arguments are (1) the presence of "fantastic elements;" and (2) the use of etiologies within the narratives.[13] By "fantastic elements," Craig refers to accounts that, by human standards, are simply too *fantastic* to have actually occurred. He defines these as "those which, if taken literally, are so extraordinary as to be palpably false."[14] Examples include the talking serpent in the garden, the global flood described in Genesis 6:9–9:29, the Tower of Babel narrative, and other similar accounts.

Etiologies and "Fantastic Elements" Evaluated

Craig argues that the presence of etiologies in Genesis 1–11 is indicative of mythology, using this observation to support his classification of these chapters as "mytho-history" rather than pure myth. According to Leland Ryken, however, an etiology is "a story that tells how a person or place received its name, or how a practice began. A biblical etiology links the origin of a name or custom to a historical event; it is not a fictional story composed to explain an existing phenomenon."[15] For Craig, these are the explanations of how things came to be, key examples being the origin of the world, the origin of humanity, and the religious cult. True, in an abstract way, these are things that the Bible has in common with ANE myths. Yet these are very general topics, and it is not surprising that the Bible—without being reliant upon similar accounts found in the ANE—would have its own explanation of such origins. Furthermore, the biblical accounts are so drastically different than pagan accounts such as Enuma Elish as to rule out any dependency upon the latter.[16] Additionally, the detailed description of Yahweh's instructions for the tabernacle and sacrificial system in Exodus 25–40 clearly explains the origin of Israel's worship practices, and yet these chapters are unquestionably part of historical narrative. Thus, the mere presence of etiological elements does not justify reclassifying Genesis 1–11 as mytho-history.

James Rochford, in a more extended critique of Craig's reasoning regarding etiologies, identifies a fundamental flaw in using their presence as support for a mytho-historical reading of Genesis 1–11:

> Do etiologies imply a mytho-historical genre? Not at all. We find this perspective to be reductionistic at best and erroneous at worst. For one, etiologies do not dehistoricize the events in question. Instead, etiologies could explain present reality because they actually occurred in the past. After all, in the

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[11] Craig, *Quest of the Historical Adam*, 137.

[12] See Craig (*Quest of the Historical Adam*, 47-131) for his defense of Genesis 1–11 as "mytho-history."

[13] Craig (*Quest of the Historical Adam*) discusses "fantastic elements" on pages 104-131 and etiologies on pages 87-100.

[14] Ibid., 104-105.

[15] Leland Ryken, "Etiology," in *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 84-85. For a complete list of the name and place etiologies in the Bible, see C. Jeff Foster, "The Name Ritual: A Mark of Significance," *JETS* 64 (2021): 703-28. Significantly, many of these occur in Genesis 12–50. In other words, they are common to historical narrative.

[16] Todd Beall has a brief but helpful discussion of the differences between Genesis 1 and ANE pagan myths in "Contemporary Hermeneutical Approaches to Genesis 1–11," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis; Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T. H. Ury (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 134-36. He writes, "A classic mistake made by Gunkel and others is to emphasize the parallels without considering the immense differences in the accounts. For example, the purpose of Enuma Elish was to exalt Marduk in the pantheon of Babylon, with creation being a minor part of the account, whereas in Genesis, God's work of creation is the central theme" (135). Cf. W. G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," in *I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, eds. R. Hess and D. Tsumura, 96-113 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

sciences, etiologies refer to the causes behind medical conditions (e.g. "You have lung cancer because you smoked cigarettes").[17]

As for the "fantastic elements" in Genesis 1–11, some admittedly stretch human imagination, but that does not mean they did not literally occur. Scripture is, after all, a book filled with the miraculous. Although Craig affirms the reality of biblical miracles, he nevertheless classifies certain miraculous events in Genesis 1–11 differently. To sustain his mytho-historical approach, he must address the flood account in Genesis 6:9–9:29—the largest narrative unit in these chapters.[18] He claims, "Modern geology and anthropology have rendered such a catastrophe all but impossible."[19] But such a statement reflects only the geologists he chooses to follow. Space does not allow a full defense here, yet evangelicals have produced substantial biblical and scholarly arguments supporting a literal, global flood.[20] Genesis 7:17–24 plainly states that "all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered," and that all humanity and land-dwelling creatures perished—far beyond the scope of a local flood. Moreover, Peter's warnings of future global judgment rest on the historical reality of a universal flood (2 Pet 2:5; 3:6; cf. Matt 24:38-39). Craig's appeal to "fantastic elements" is further weakened by the many miraculous events throughout the Pentateuch (they are not just limited to Gen 1–11). In Genesis 12–50 alone we find divine dreams and visions, the appearance of heavenly beings to Abraham (Gen 18), Sarah conceiving in old age, Jacob wrestling with the Lord, and Joseph interpreting dreams. Exodus adds the burning bush, the plagues of Egypt, the Red Sea crossing, and numerous wilderness miracles. Where, then, does one draw the line between "fantastic elements" that supposedly indicate mytho-history and those that simply belong to Old Testament historical narrative?

HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN REGARD TO GENESIS 1–2

The purpose of the previous section was to show that all of Genesis 1–11 is written in the genre of historical narrative, by which we understand—absent compelling evidence to the contrary—that the details of Genesis 1–2 are reliable and historically true. Although exegesis can affect how literally certain details are taken (e.g., the meaning of "day"), recognizing Genesis 1–11 as historical narrative should guide the overall hermeneutical approach to Genesis 1–2. [Discussion of the word "day," Hebrew יוֹם, will appear later in the paper]. In this section, several additional points will be made regarding the hermeneutics of Genesis 1–2.

Evolution is Contrary to Genesis 1–2

First, nothing in the text of Genesis 1 or 2 remotely suggests that evolution played any role. Life is never said to develop from a single-cell organism, and humanity does not arise from lower forms of life. Rather, man is created distinctly from the animal world, made in the image of God, and given the privilege of exercising dominion on God's behalf. The sequence of events in Genesis directly contradicts evolutionary theory.

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[17] James Rochford, "Genesis as Mytho-History: A Critical Evaluation of William Lane Craig's Genre Analysis." Available online at: < https://evidenceunseen.com/apologetics/science-and-scripture/genesis-as-mytho-history-a-critical-evaluation-of-william-lane-craigs-genre-analysis>.

[18] Craig argues against the idea of a universal global flood in *Quest of the Historical Adam*, 120-28.

[19] Ibid., 121. Craig is not alone in denying the biblical account of a universal global flood. Others do also, including Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe (https://reasons.org/christianity/bible/exploring-the-extent-of-the-flood-part-one?utm_source=copilot.com).

[20] In defense of the flood being a universal, global event, see William D. Barrick, "Noah's Flood and Its Geological Implications," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis; Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. T. Mortenson and T. H. Ury, 251-81 (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008); Andrew Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past*, vol. 1 and 2 (Green Forest: Master Books, 2009); Todd Beall, "Noah's Flood: Just Another Pagan Myth?" *Bible and* Spade 28:4 (Fall 2015): 98; Ken Ham and Bodie Hodge, *A Flood of Evidence; 40 Reasons Noah and the Ark Still Matter* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016); and "Marcus R. Ross, "Genesis Flood (Global View)," in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science*, ed. Paul Copan et al. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2017).

Evolution places the "big bang" first, with stars, planets, and the sun preceding life; yet Genesis 1:11–13 states that vegetation appeared before the sun and moon. Most importantly, the biblical account affirms that all creation came by God's spoken word—not by evolutionary processes grounded in natural selection and survival of the fittest. Hebrew 11:3 states, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."

An Understanding of Genesis 1–2 Must Take the New Testament into Consideration

Second, the testimony of the New Testament shows that the creation account in Genesis cannot involve millions of years, since man was present "in the beginning." In Jesus' teaching on divorce (Mk 10:6), He declared, "But **from the beginning of creation** God made them male and female." In Romans 5:12–21, Paul affirms that Adam was the "first man" who brought death and condemnation to all humanity—clearly an historical figure with no predecessors. Likewise, in Romans 1:20 Paul declares, "Since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes . . . have been clearly seen," implying that humans were present from the time creation began to witness God's self-revelation.

Genesis 1–2 Concerns the Creation of the Material World

Third, Genesis 1–2 is plainly concerned with the creation of the material world, even while making important theological points. Walton is therefore mistaken when he writes, "It is fruitless to ask what *things* God created on day one, for the text is not concerned about *things* and therefore will not address itself to that question."[21] For him, Genesis 1 is about God creating *function* rather than material entities.[22] In response, not only does the terminology of Genesis 1–2 contradict this (note the varied verbs for creating or making: בָּרָא, עָשָׂה, יָצַר, and בָּנָה), but the rest of the Old Testament repeatedly alludes to Genesis 1 to reaffirm Yahweh Elohim as Creator of all—implying His right to rule and judge His creation (e.g., Exod 31:17; 2 Kgs 19:15; Neh 9:6; Ps 124:8; Isa 42:5-6; 45:12; Jer 32:17; Acts 17:24; etc.). In Psalm 148:3-5, for instance, we read:

> [3] Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all stars of light!
> [4] Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens!
> [5] Let them praise the name of the LORD, for **He commanded and they were created**.

This God did by His breathed-out word, as the repeated statements "Let there be" in Genesis 1 attest (cf. Ps 33:6; Heb 11:3).

Furthermore, the New Testament is clear not only in attributing the creation of all material things to Jesus Christ, but in specifying that this creative work occurred "in the beginning." The Apostle John opens his gospel accordingly: "In the beginning was the Word, ... All things came into being through Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn 1:1-3). Likewise, Paul affirms in Colossians 1:16 that: "by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him," attributing the origin of both the material and the invisible realms to Christ Jesus.

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[21] John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 84.

[22] Walton, "Reading Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology," 147-57. Walton does understand that Elohim is the Creator God but denies that Genesis 1 is addressing the issue of material creation. He writes, "So, yes, God did create all matter and, at least at some point, he created it out of nothing. But we are not trying to understand all of God's creative work; we are trying to understand what part of creation Gen 1 is addressing. I contend that Gen 1 has chosen to provide an account of functional origins, as would be typical in the ancient world, rather than an account of material origins" (156-57).

Any Polemical Concerns in Genesis 1–2 Do Not Negate a Literal Hermeneutic

Fourth, whether or not Genesis 1–2 carries an unstated polemic against ANE mythologies and pagan deities does not warrant abandoning a literal hermeneutic. Waltke has argued that the "narrator's concern is not scientific or historical but theological and indirectly polemical against pagan mythologies."[23] Others have expressed similar views.[24] Yet those who propose that Genesis 1–2 functions as a polemic do not agree on which culture is in view—Babylonian, Egyptian, or Canaanite. Certainly Genesis 1 exalts Israel's God as not only supreme but, in contrast to the gods of surrounding nations, the only true deity. Still, even if Genesis 1–2 contains a secondary theological polemic, this does not logically require abandoning belief in a literal six-day creation. The Egyptian plagues were directed against Egypt's gods, yet this in no way negates the fact that those divine judgments truly occurred.[25]

The Literary "Framework View"—As Traditionally Argued—Is Not a Controlling Hermeneutic

One hermeneutical approach in an effort to understand Genesis 1 is what is known as the "Framework View."[26] 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 Lee Irons, the first triad of days (Days 1–3) concerns *creation kingdoms*, while the second triad (Days 4–6) concerns the *creature-kings* who exercise dominion over those kingdoms:

Creation kingdoms		**Creature kings**		
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 association of man with vegetation

The Creator King

Day 7 Sabbath

[23] Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 76.

[24] John H. Stek, "What Says the Scripture?" in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. H. J. Van Till (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 229-231; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:55; Wenham, Genesis 1–15, xlv, 9; and 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), 1-21.

[25] John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1971), 86-96.

[26] 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: <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1996/PSCF3-96Kline.html>]; Lee Irons with Meredith G. Kline, "The Framework View," in *The Genesis 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," 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. J. A. Pipa Jr. and D. W. Hall (Taylors, SC: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1999), 122-128. The Framework View is sometimes embraced by scholars holding different views of creation. Hence, Bruck K. Waltke, who holds to both the pre-creation chaos theory and 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*, ed. J. D. Charles [Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013], 31-32).

A. A Summary of the Framework View

David Hagopian summarizes the framework view in this way:

> 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 resting on the seventh was not intended to reveal the sequence or duration of creation, but to proclaim an eschatological theology of creation.[27]

In defending the framework view, Irons and Kline argue:

> . . . the total picture of God's completing His creative work in a week of days is not to be taken literally. Instead it functions as a literary structure in which the creative works of God have been narrated in a topical order. . . . Although . . . [the days] refer to actual historical events that actually occurred, they are narrated in a nonsequential order within the literary structure or framework of a seven-day week.[28]

They go on to confess, "We affirm a historical creation, a historical Adam, and a historical Fall."[29] Though denying the biblical sequence, they do admit that man was created last and this was followed by the Sabbath rest.[30]

The bottom line of this approach is that the days of Genesis 1 are not intended to be understood as literal 24-hour days; rather, they function as a theological *framework*. The days are arranged *topically*, not chronologically or sequentially.

B. Defense Offered for the Framework View

In defense of understanding the days *figuratively*, Irons and Kline state, ". . . 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."[31] 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. Thus, Day 1 presents the results, while Day 4 supplies the physical mechanism by which God produced that light. In this view, the relationship between Day 1 and Day 4 becomes the key to the entire framework: "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."[32]

A second defense of their view rests on Genesis 2:5-6 and the statement "the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth." From this they argue that no plants existed because there was no rain, and that God then initiated ordinary operations by providing a raincloud rather than resorting to "an extraordinary mode of providence during the creation period."[33] Their point is that God established a natural, not supernatural, means of watering. From this they extrapolate that the light of Day 1 likewise was not a temporary supernatural provision but a natural one.

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[27] David G. Hagopian, "Introduction," in *The Genesis Debate; Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), 16.

[28] Lee Irons; and Meredith Kline, "The Framework View," in *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, 219.

[29] Ibid., 220.

[30] Ibid., 221.

[31] Ibid., 219-220.

[32] Ibid., 230.

[33] Ibid., 236.

A third defense offered for the view is the observation that Day 7 has no concluding statement like "there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day." Therefore, Day 7 is an *infinitely long and unending day*. From this, they conclude that the seventh day, having no end, cannot be a literal day. And if the seventh day is not literal, then the first six days likewise should not be regarded as literal or sequential.

C. A Refutation of the Framework View

Several responses have been published critiquing the Framework View, and the reader is directed to those for fuller discussion.[34] The Framework View rests partly on perceived parallels between Days 1–3 and Days 4–6. Yet how one frames these parallels—and how one understands the relationship between the parts—significantly shapes the conclusions drawn from them. Rather than seeing "Creation Kingdoms" in parallel with "Creature Kings," the parallels more appropriately relate to Genesis 1:2 and the understanding of *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* as "unformed" and "unfilled." Days 1–3 depict how God formed various spheres, whereas Days 4–6 show how He *filled* those spheres.

God Forming and Filling

Vs 1 - "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth**"

Vs 2 - "**Now the earth was formless (*tōhu* = unformed) and empty (*bohu* = unfilled)**"

Spheres	Focus on **Giving Form** by Three Primary Separations	Focus on **Filling** of the Sphere with Appropriate Creations
The Sphere of the Heavenlies	**Day 1** Light Separating the Darkness in the Heavenlies	**Day 4** Numerous Light Objects Created to Fill the Heavenlies
The Sphere of the Skies and Sea (non-land)	**Day 2** An Expanse Separating the Waters Above from the Waters Below	**Day 5** Sea Creatures to Fill the Waters Below and Birds to Fill the Expanse Above
The Sphere of Dry Land	**Day 3** Separating the Dry Land on which Edible Foods Will Grow	**Day 6** Animals and Man Created to Fill the Dry Land, Sustained by Edible Foods

Even if a certain paralleling of Days 1–3 with Days 4–6 exists, that alone does not substantiate the conclusion that these are merely literary days rather than literal 24-hour days. As noted earlier—and illustrated in the case of the Gideon narrative—Hebrew narrative frequently employs "literary artistry," or what I have termed *textual patterning*, to enhance the message without sacrificing literal interpretation. Thus, these days should still be understood as sequential, literal days. The creation of mankind on the sixth day as the climax of God's creative work further affirms the sequential order.

The most glaring problem for the Framework View is *hermeneutical*: nothing in the text affirms, much less demands, the conclusion that the days are non-literal or non-sequential. 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

[34] See the responses to Irons and Kline in *The Genesis 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. T. Mortenson and T. H. Ury, 211-49 (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

> 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.[35]

A key principle of interpretation is that clearer passages must be given greater weight than those less clear. The Framework View simply cannot evade the straightforward statements in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, and that this pattern forms the basis for the Sabbath week.

As for the statement in Genesis 2:5–6 about rain not yet falling, this argument fails on exegetical grounds. The passage does not teach that there were no plants or that there was no water for them. Verse 5 states, "Now no shrub (שִׂיחַ, *śîaḥ*) of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant (עֵשֶׂב, *ʿēśeḇ*) of the field had yet sprouted." This does not contradict Genesis 1:11–12, as though vegetation were absent until after Adam's creation. A "shrub" (שִׂיחַ, *śîaḥ*) refers to a wild bush that flourishes in arid, wilderness conditions and requires little water (Gen 21:15; Job 30:7).[36] There were plants (עֵשֶׂב, *ʿēśeḇ*); they simply had not yet sprouted. Moreover, water was already present for these plants. Framework advocates misinterpret verse 6—"But an *ʾēḏ* (אֵד) used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground"—when they render *ʾēḏ* as "raincloud." Although the NASB95 and ESV (following *BDB*) translate *ʾēḏ* (אֵד) as "mist," *HALOT* (11) defines it as a "subterranean stream of fresh water, celestial stream," a meaning followed by the NET[2] Bible, NIV2011, and NRSV. The NIV2011 translates, "streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground." So, water for vegetation was already present; the notion that everything awaited the creation of a raincloud is foreign to the passage.

As for the seventh day, the Sabbath, nothing in the text indicates that it was an unending day; such a conclusion is merely assumed and lacks explicit textual support. While it is true that Genesis does not say, "there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day," the narrative is not concerned with moving on to an eighth day, so the omission is natural and does not imply an endless seventh day. Although Hebrews 4 treats God's Sabbath rest typologically, the author is not asserting that the seventh day in Genesis never ended. Rather, he exhorts his readers to persevere in faith so that they may enter the future "rest" associated with the messianic kingdom of Christ and enjoy a full reward. The Sabbath rest anticipates that eschatological rest, a central theme of the epistle—not an infinitely extended seventh day in Genesis.

SELECTED EXEGETICAL DETAILS CONSIDERED

While space does not permit a full exegesis of Genesis 1–2, the aim here is to clarify several key matters that guide the overall interpretation of the creation account. Especially important is the syntactical relationship of the first five verses and how they interconnect to form the foundation for understanding the narrative that follows.

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[35] J. Ligon Duncan and David W. Hall, *The Genesis Debate*, 266.

[36] The NET[2] Bible notes, "The first term, שִׂיחַ (*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 further discussion, 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).

I. Genesis 1:1 – "In the beginning" (בְּרֵאשִׁית, *bᵊrēšîṯ*) – Definite or Indefinite Phrase?

The Bible begins with the word בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bᵊrēšîṯ*), 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."[37] They reason that the opening phrase should be translated "In *a beginning when* God created" or "When God began to create" as if it did not refer to an absolute beginning. Such an understanding, however, is incorrect; the phrase should be taken as an absolute beginning. Gordon Wenham explains why:

> . . . the absence of the article in בראשׁית 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 ראשׁית may not have an absolute sense. It may well have an absolute sense in Isa 46:10, and the analogous expression מראשׁ in Prov 8:23 certainly refers to the beginning of all creation. The context of בראשׁית standing at the start of the account of world history makes an absolute sense highly appropriate here.[38]

To this, Bruce 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 *ʿolam*, "eternity," when used in adverbial expressions, occur almost invariably *without* the article, and that in the absolute state.[39]

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."[40] So, as for Genesis 1:1, the first word is in the absolute state, and verse 1 is an independent clause.

The form בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bᵊrēšîṯ*) is found five times in the MT (cf. Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34).[41] In Jeremiah, it refers to an event at the beginning of a particular king's reign. Although grammatically indefinite—as in Genesis

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[37] So Ibn Izra (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 …").

[38] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 12.

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

[40] 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.

[41] Of these verses in Jeremiah, it is Jer 28:1 that introduces some confusion, since the MT appears to state that the events occurred both "in the beginning" and "in the fourth year" of Zedekiah's reign. However, this verse (as well as Jer 27:1) presents a well-known text-critical problem. The LXX for 28:1 does not include the words "in the beginning," but simply reads: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ ἔτει Σεδεκια βασιλέως Ιουδα, "And it came about in the fourth year of Zedekiah king of Judah ...." See the NET[2] Bible's technical note for further discussion. Given the controversial nature of this verse, it would be precarious to argue from Jer 28:1 that בְּרֵאשִׁית in Gen 1:1 need not refer to an absolute beginning. J. A. Thompson omits "in the beginning" from his translation of Jer 28:1: "In that same year, in the fourth year of Zedekiah king of Judah…" (*Jeremiah*, NICOT [Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980], 537). He notes that "in that same year" is appropriate because the events of chapter 28 occurred shortly after those of chapter 27, and Jeremiah was still wearing the yoke (vv. 10–11).

1:1—it is clearly understood as definite ("in *the* beginning," not "in *a* beginning"). Jeremiah 26:1, which uses the same form, would never be translated "in a beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." Thus, בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bᵊrēšîṯ*), can and should certainly be understood as definite in Genesis 1:1.

II. Genesis 1:1 – "In the beginning God created" - Independent or Dependent Clause?

Having shown that the prepositional phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bᵊrēšîṯ*), "in the beginning," should be understood as definite despite being indefinite in form, the next question concerns its relation to the words that follow. Some would argue that רֵאשִׁית is *in construct* with בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, thereby forming a *dependent clause*. On this view, the opening could be translated "In *a beginning when* God created" or "When God began to create," treating the phrase as a protasis whose apodosis appears either in Genesis 1:2 or 1:3 (most who adopt this approach place 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 appearing in verse 2. Thus, he rendered the passage, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ). This view has few adherents today, though a variation appears in the NRSV translation: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void . . . ." The difficulty with this interpretation is that Genesis 1:2 is a circumstantial (parenthetical) clause providing background information for understanding either verse 1 or verse 3; therefore, verse 1 or verse 3 must be the main clause.

By contrast, the Jewish commentator Rashi understood verse 2 as parenthetical, with the independent clause (the apodosis) in verse 3. On this reading: "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 adopted more recently by Skinner (ICC, 1930) and Speiser (Anchor, 1969).

There are, however, problems with both views that construe Genesis 1:1 as a dependent clause. First, בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bᵊrēšîṯ*) appears only four other times (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34), and in each case the phrase is not in construct with the verb. Second, if the author had intended verse 1 to function as a dependent clause, he could have used an infinitive construction, as he does in Genesis 2:4 with בְּהִבָּרְאָם (*bᵊhibbārᵊʾām*):

> אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבָּרְאָם
> 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 the view of most modern commentators, and it is reflected in the translations of NASB95/2020, NET[2] Bible, NIV2011, NKJV, ESV, and NLT.

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

The traditional view is that Genesis 1:1 records God's first act in the six-day creation account. Some, however, argue that Genesis 1:1 is not a description of the initial creative act but a *summary* of the entire pericope (Gen 1:2–2:3) or a title for the creation week. Wenham notes several advocates of this view: Driver, Gunkel,

Procksch, Zimmerli, von Rad, Eichrodt, Cassuto, Schmidt, Westermann, Beauchamp, and Steck.[42] The respected evangelical scholar Bruce Waltke also argues for the summary-statement view.[43] He affirms that Genesis 1:1 is an independent main clause but understands "the heavens and the earth" as a merism referring to the total cosmos. One argument he offers for taking Genesis 1:1 as a summary of what follows is its similarity to the concluding statement after the creation days in Genesis 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."

Waltke therefore understands Genesis 1:1 as a summary statement of God's creative activity recorded in Genesis 1:3–31. Genesis 1:2, in his view, is a parenthetical (circumstantial) clause describing the condition of the chaotic earth at the time God began the creative work narrated in 1:3–31. If Waltke is correct, this implies—quite significantly—that "the earth" mentioned at the beginning of Genesis 1:2 already existed *prior to* the creation week. (To clarify, he does not take the creation week as a literal six days, though some advocates of the summary view do.) Furthermore, he appeals to Isaiah 45:18 ("God … did not create it a waste place" [לֹא־תֹהוּ בְרָאָהּ], using the same word תֹּהוּ (*tōhû*) found in Genesis 1:2, to argue that the condition of the earth in Genesis 1:2 was *not* the result of God's creative activity but presumably the result of catastrophe or judgment. His conclusion is that the earth—albeit in a primitive state—existed for an undefined period before the creation week began. Combined with his rejection of literal 24-hour days, this allows him to reason that the earth, as well as God's creative work in Genesis 1, may have unfolded over a very long period, potentially even millions or billions of years (though he does not specify a number).

Waltke further supports his view by appealing to the similarity between the way the first literary unit (Gen 1:1–2:3) begins and the way the second literary unit (Gen 2:4ff) begins, noting that they share a similar syntactical structure:

Genesis 1:1-3	**Genesis 2:4-7**
1. *Introductory summary statement*:	1. *Introductory summary statement*:
"In the beginning God created the cosmos" (1:1).	"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 the negative state before creation:	2. *Circumstantial clause* of the pattern *waw* + noun + verb (היה) describing a negative state before creation:
"Now the earth was devoid of form …" (1:2).	"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:	3. *Main clause* of the pattern *waw* consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation:
"And God said …" (1:3).	"Then the Lord God formed man …" (2:7).

[42] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 12. 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.

[43] B. K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory," 216-28; and *Genesis; A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 58-59.

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 function as *bookends* representing all God's work during the creation week?

A closer examination shows that Genesis 2:1 is not a verbatim reiteration of Genesis 1:1. Instead, it states, "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, **and all their hosts**." If "the heavens and the earth" already represent everything God created, why does the author add "and all their hosts"? And what does he mean by "all their hosts" (כָּל־צְבָאָם, *ḵol-ṣᵊḇāʾām*). The noun "host" (צָבָא, *ṣᵊḇāʾ*) has a broad semantic range—at least seven nuances are listed in *BDB* (838-39)—but only three are relevant here: (1) most commonly, the created heavenly bodies (sun, moon, 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) "the entire creation," though BDB 1d lists only Genesis 2:1 under this category. The rarity of the third option casts doubts on its likelihood, and the absence of any reference to angelic creation in Genesis 1 makes the second option improbable. Thus, the most natural reading is that the author means God created the heavens and the earth along with all the heavenly objects beyond earth's atmosphere.[44] Even though the creation of the sun, moon, and stars had already been mentioned in Genesis 1:14–16, the author intentionally highlights the creation of all the heavenly objects again in Genesis 2:1.[45] His purpose is to draw special attention to these celestial bodies because they would later become objects of worship among numerous pagan cultures. Israel needed to understand that the very entities venerated by the nations were themselves created by the God with whom they had entered into covenant relationship.

Furthermore, Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:1 are not saying the same thing. Genesis 1:1 declares that God created the heavens and the earth, whereas Genesis 2:1 teaches that God took His creative work further—*He completed them* (וַיְכֻלּוּ). The verb כָּלָה (*kālâ*) means to "*complete, bring to an end, finish* a thing, task, work, etc." (*BDB* 478). Its use in 1 Kings 6:9 (Solomon's construction of the temple) illustrates this well: "So he built the house and finished it (וַיְכַלֵּהוּ); and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar." The emphasis falls on what Solomon did to bring the temple to completion. Likewise, Genesis 1:1 informs us that God created the heavens and the earth—that is, their initial but incomplete form—and Genesis 2:1 tells us that through His work during the creation week, He *brought them to completion*.

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" occur together in the same verse 180 times, and in 109 of those they appear within three words of each other. In several of these, the phrase clearly denotes the totality of creation.[46] Exodus 31:17 is a good example: "for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." Jeremiah 32:17 is another: "Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm!" The parallel line in Psalm 89:11 reinforces this sense of

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[44] John Day also takes the position that "heavens" in Gen 1:1 refers to the near atmosphere above the earth. He writes, "Again, the heavens in the sense of the atmosphere above the earth is envisaged as being created in Gen. 1.1, the solid dome of the firmament is added in vv. 6-8, and finally the sun, moon and stars come into existence, having been set in the firmament in vv. 14-18" (*From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1–11*, The Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies 726 [London: T & T Clark, 2022], 6).

[45] 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.

[46] 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; 65:17; Jer 32:17; Joel 4:16; Ps 89:12; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; and 2 Chron 2:11.

comprehensiveness: "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all it contains, You have founded them."

Yet, several passages show that the phrase "the heavens and the earth" does not always denote the totality of creation, since authors sometimes add further created elements beyond it. We have already seen this in Genesis 2:1, where the writer adds "and all their hosts." Another example is Exodus 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."[47] If "the heavens and the earth" were exhaustive (meaning the totality of creation), why add "the sea and all that is in them"? Likewise, Nehemiah 9:6 expands the formula: "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." Finally, Jeremiah 23:24 shows the phrase used in a spatial rather than comprehensive sense: "'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?'"

A survey of the Old Testament shows that the phrase "the heavens and the earth" sometimes refers to God's total creation, but in other cases it does not. Thus its use in Genesis 1:1 and 2:1, 4 must be evaluated in context. Yet several considerations indicate that "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 is not a merism for the totality of creation.

(1) If "the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1 were intended to represent the total cosmos, we might expect the LXX to translate it with the Greek term "*kósmos*" (κόσμος).[48] Instead, the translators rendered the phrase quite literally as τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, "the heavens and the earth." Notably, the LXX does use *kósmos* later in this section at Genesis 2:1—not for "the heavens and the earth" but for "all their hosts" (πᾶς ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν). Since the LXX also employs *kósmos* for heavenly objects in Deuteronomy 4:19 and 17:3, this is likely how they understood it in Genesis 2:1.

(2) Regarding Waltke's proposed parallel between Genesis 1:1–3 and 2:4–7, his claim that Genesis 1:1 and 2:4 each begin with a "summary statement" is doubtful. It is more accurate to view both as introductory statements rather than summaries, since neither actually encapsulates what follows. Their placement before a *waw*-disjunctive clause (in these cases, episode-initial) does not make them summary headings. In fact, Genesis 2:4—being a *tôledôt* formula—functions to introduce a new section, not to summarize its contents.[49] We see a similar pattern in the *tôledôt* section of Genesis 37:2, where the opening statement is clearly not a summary, since the ensuing narrative focuses on Joseph rather than Jacob. These *tôledôt* formulas serve a distinctive structural role in Genesis, and thus the *tôledôt* in Genesis 2:4 does not imply that Genesis 1:1 is a summary of what follows. Rather, the term *tôledôt* in 2:4 introduces a new section by explaining what became of God's original creation described in Genesis 1:1–2:3. Commenting on Genesis 2:4, Allen Ross explains:

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

[48] Waltke argued for the understanding "cosmos" on the basis that in the Apocrypha, Wisdom of Solomon 1:14 refers to Gen 1:1 as *ho kosmos*, "the world" (*Genesis: A Commentary*, 59). However, as noted above, the LXX itself—whose rendering should carry greater weight—does not use *kosmos* in Genesis 1:1.

[49] The word תּוֹלְדוֹת (*tôlēḏôṯ*), 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, NIV2011, NET[2]). The point, however, is to explain what became of each preceding unit (what resulted from it).

> This passage is the first part of the *tôledôt* of the heavens and earth, which runs through chapter 4. This first *tôledôt* 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.[50]

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

The arguments supporting the summary view of Genesis 1:1 are less persuasive than they initially appear.[51] Moreover, Genesis 1:1 does not summarize all of God's activity in the rest of the chapter; rather, it serves as an introductory statement—both to the chapter and to the Bible as a whole. It is logically fitting that humanity would be given some understanding of "the beginning." If Waltke's view were correct, Genesis 1 would describe not the absolute beginning of all creation but only a relative beginning, since for him the earth already existed in a primitive state prior to the creation week beginning in Genesis 1:3. Yet numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments indicate that Genesis 1 presents an absolute beginning. Foremost among these 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," is an unmistakable allusion to Genesis 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, the blood of Abel is associated with "the foundation of the world" (καταβολῆς κόσμου), an expression used eighteen times in the NT and consistently referring to the very beginning (e.g., Jn 17:24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3). Jesus Himself, in arguing against divorce, declared, "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female" (Mk 10:6), using the same word for "beginning" (ἀρχή) that the LXX uses in Genesis 1:1. According to Jesus, then, Genesis 1:1 is not simply *a beginning* but "the beginning of creation."[52] Finally, Proverbs 8:22–31 elaborates on the Genesis 1 account by teaching that God possessed "wisdom" before making the earth and establishing the heavens; yet these are not treated as a summary of creation but as specific components of what God brought into existence during the six-day creation, "at the beginning of His way" (רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכּוֹ, *rēʾšîṯ darkô*).

If Genesis 1:1 is not a summary of the creation account, what then is it saying about "the heavens and the earth"? The most coherent reading is that it describes God's first creative act: He brought into existence the heavens in which He would later place the sun, moon, and stars on day four, and He created the earth in its primitive, unformed state—a watery, sluggish mass not yet shaped for habitation. Otherwise, verse two would introduce the earth abruptly, with no explanation of its origin or its initial condition, an unsatisfactory account of beginnings.[53] But if verse one records the basic creation of the earth, then verse two describes its initial

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[50] Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing; A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 117. See pages 69-74 for his extended discussion of *tôlēḏôt* and the role these play in the literary structure of Genesis.

[51] For a critique of the "summary statement" view, see Anton Pearson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:1-3," *Bethel Seminary Quarterly* 2 (1953), 14-33; and John Day, *From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1–11*, 4-9.

[52] Since ἀρχή occurs in a prepositional phrase (ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως), it does not require the article to be considered definite (cf. Mk 13:19 and 2 Pet 3:4). Also, Christ spoke of Satan being a murderer "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς) in John 8:44.

[53] John Day, who also argues that Gen 1:1-5 is all part of Day 1, makes the same point. He reasons, "However, it does not make sense for v. 1 to say in a summary statement that God created the earth and then not tell the story of its original creation but rather assume its pre-creation existence. Verse 1, therefore, most naturally relates to God's creation of the earth, along with the heavens, immediately preceding v. 2" (*From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1–11*, 6-7). In arguing against the summary statement view, John Day goes on to cite numerous ancient sources that understood Gen 1:1 to be part of the 1st day creation (7).

state—one not yet suitable for human life. Everything in the remainder of the chapter moves toward preparing the earth for human habitation, culminating in the creation of the man and woman, the first human beings.

IV. Genesis 1:2 – "Now the earth was *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ)"

Two key questions immediately emerge with verse two that affect 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 *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ), translated by the older KJV as "without form and void."

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

In the late 1700s, geologists began arguing that the earth's history extended far beyond a few thousand years (contra the 17th-century Ussher chronology). In response, some biblical scholars in the 1800s proposed the "gap theory of Genesis 1:1–2" (or gap creationism) as a way to accommodate these emerging geological claims. According to this view, an undefined span of time existed between verse one and verse two, allowing for geological ages while still maintaining literal 24-hour creation days. As early as 1814, Thomas Chalmers, a Presbyterian pastor, advanced this idea.[54] George Pember further developed gap creationism in 1876,[55] and the Scofield Reference Bible (1917) popularized it even more by prominently teaching a "second creative act" in its notes.[56]

Two primary arguments are commonly advanced in support of gap creationism. First, proponents contend that the verb הָיְתָה (*hāyᵊṯâ*) in the opening clause of Genesis 1:2 should be translated "had become" (a pluperfect form) rather than "was." On this reading, God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning, but they *had become ṯōhû wāḇōhû*. Second, they argue that the words *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* denotes an imperfect, even ruined state that could not reflect God's creative work—often attributing this condition to a divine judgment on the universe following Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven.

In response to the second argument, there is no compelling reason to conclude that *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* necessarily denotes a catastrophic condition resulting from judgment.[57] Mark Rooker has demonstrated this carefully in his *Bibliotheca Sacra* articles, showing that the phrase need not imply ruin or divine punishment.[58] [See my fuller discussion of *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* in the following pages].

As for the argument based on the verb הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Genesis 1:2, the evidence strongly weighs against translating it as "had become." Syntactically, the opening clause of verse two (וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ) does <u>not</u> represent action subsequent to verse one. Rather, it is a parenthetical disjunctive clause—a type of

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[54] 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, 1836), 347–72. This was a review of Georges Cuvier, *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, trans. Robert Kerr (Edinburgh, 1813).

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

[56] Other contemporary defenders of gap creationism have been Arthur C. Custance, *Without Form and Void* (Brockville, Ontario: Doorway Publications, 1970; reprint, Classic Reprint Press, 2008); and Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament; Volume 1, Genesis—Song of Solomon* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 5.

[57] 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).

[58] Mark Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:595 (Jul-Sep 1992): 316-23; and Part 2 in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149:596 (Oct-Dec 1992): 411-27.

circumstantial clause—providing background information before the narrative action begins in verse three. It is best rendered, "Now the earth was…" (so NIV2011 and the NET[2] Bible), indicating the condition of the earth at the time God commanded light in verse three.

The verb הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Genesis 1:2 (Qal perfect, 3-f-s), is the standard Hebrew equative verb, normally rendered "is/was." In certain contexts it can legitimately mean "become/became," as in Genesis 19:26, where Lot's wife "became" a pillar of salt:

וַתַּבֵּט אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתְּהִי נְצִיב מֶלַח׃

"But his wife, behind him, looked back, and she <u>became</u> a pillar of salt."

However, nothing in Genesis 1:2 supports that sense here. The clause simply describes the earth's condition, not a change of state.

When הָיָה (*hāyâ*) carries the meaning "become/became," it typically appears in a *waw*-consecutive clause, as in the example above.[59] By contrast, in every instance where הָיָה (*hāyâ*) occurs in a disjunctive parenthetical clause, it consistently bears the simple sense "was/were," never "became" or "had become."[60] This is exactly what we should expect, since the very function of a disjunctive parenthetical clause is not to advance the narrative sequence but to interrupt it in order to supply information about a state of existence. Its role is descriptive—even when placed at the beginning of a paragraph to launch the story. Lambdin calls this the "*explanatory* or *parenthetical* use," in which disjunctive clauses break into the main narrative to provide information necessary for understanding the narrative."[61] A clear example is Genesis 3:1:

וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכֹּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

"Now the serpent <u>was</u> more crafty than any living creature of the field."

In conclusion, the gap-creationism interpretation of Genesis 1:2 is incorrect. The initial clause is a disjunctive parenthetical clause that does not advance the action of verse one but interrupts the narrative to supply essential information about the earth's initial condition as created. It describes the state of the earth before God began to shape and develop it into a world suitable for human habitation.

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[59] 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 NIV2011 (contra most Engl translations) translates הָיָה (*hāyâ*) in Gen 3:20 ("she would become"), but this occurs in a causal clause following the particle כִּי. The verb 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 English versions simply translate it "were." The imperfect form יִהְיֶה in Gen 48:19 could be translated "will become," but this is in *reported speech*.

[60] 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 in view, a participle form of the verb will be used (e.g., Gen 13:7; 1 Sam 1:9).

[61] Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1971), 164. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 651-52 (§39.2.3c).

B. What is the meaning of the words ṯōhû wāḇōhû (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ) in verse 2*?*

These words are rendered somewhat differently in the major English translations:

NKJV - "The earth was without form, and void." [so ESV]
NASB95 - "The earth was formless and void."
NASB2020 - "And the earth was a formless and desolate emptiness."
NIV2011 - "Now the earth was formless and empty."
NRSV - "the earth was a formless void . . ."
NET[2] - "Now the earth was without shape and empty."

Although the translations do not differ significantly, they do not make the implication of the earth's condition entirely clear. The crucial question is this: does Genesis 1:2 describe a *primitive, incomplete, primordial* state of the earth as it came from God's hand (the traditional view), or does it indicate an *imperfect, ruined* condition resulting from catastrophe or divine judgment? Both the summary view of Genesis 1:1 and the gap theory of Genesis 1:1–2 assume the latter.

Waltke (who adopts the summary view of Genesis 1:1) argues, on the basis of Isaiah 45:18, that God did not create the earth *ṯōhû wāḇōhû*. Restated, his position is that Genesis 1:1 functions as a summary heading for the chapter rather than the first stage of creation. Genesis 1:2 then describes the condition of the earth at the time the six-day creation begins in 1:3. He also maintains that an indefinite period of time separates verse one from verse two, during which the earth entered a state of chaos—presumably the result of divine judgment. For this reason, he refers to his view as "the precreation chaos theory."[62]

Yet the claim that *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* is indicative of judgment or catastrophe rather than simply being the initial state of God's creative work does not withstand close scrutiny.

The terms *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* are admittedly rare, but the same combination is used elsewhere in Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11—the only other verses in the OT where *bōhû* [בֹּהוּ] occurs.

1) Jeremiah 4:23 – "I looked on the earth, and behold, it was formless and void (תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ); and to the heavens, and they had no light" (NASB95).

   In Waltke's view, the Jeremiah passage not only parallels Genesis 1 but depicts a reversal of creation 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."[63] Jeremiah 4:23 cannot be used to prove that Genesis 1:2 reflects divine wrath or judgment (though for Waltke, the state is still chaos—something inherently wrong). Yet Jeremiah does not supply the lexical or contextual basis for that conclusion.

2) Isaiah 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 (תֹהוּ) and the plumb line of emptiness (בֹהוּ)" (NASB95).

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[62] 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," 216-28. Allen P. Ross follows the same view as Waltke (see *Creation & Blessing*, 105-07).

[63] Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part II: The Restitution Theory," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (Apr-Jun 1975), 141.

> In this passage, Isaiah depicts God's judgment as reducing Edom to a state resembling its pre-creation condition—desolate, uninhabited, and without structure. From Isaiah's perspective, divine wrath returns the object of judgment to something like its original, unformed state.

The word *tōhû* is commonly understood to mean "formlessness" or "emptiness" (*BDB* 1062). The use in Isaiah 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 [תֹּהוּ], but formed it to be inhabited). [NIV2011: "he did not create it to be empty"].

Isaiah 45:18 states that God did not create the earth *ṯōhû* but *formed it* (יְצָרָהּ, *yᵊṣārāh*) to be inhabited. In this context, *ṯōhû* stands in direct contrast to what has been shaped, ordered, and made suitable for habitation. Regarding יָצַר (*yāṣar*), McComiskey states,

> The basic meaning of this root is 'to form,' 'to fashion.' While the word occurs in synonymous parallelism with *bārāʾ* 'create' and *ʿāśâ* 'make' in a number of passages, its primary emphasis is on the shaping or forming of the object involved.[64]

That is, God did not make the earth to remain an empty mass, void of form and unsuitable for habitation. Yet based on Isaiah 45:18, Waltke claimed that the state of the earth described in Genesis 1:2 could not be attributable to God, whether *ṯōhû* is taken to mean chaos or simply unformed (i.e., incomplete). Those holding the traditional view reply that Isaiah 45:18 is not meant to be taken as an absolute statement of earth's condition. Rather, divine *purpose* is in view: God did not create the earth for the purpose of it being *ṯōhû*, but rather for the purpose that it might be inhabited. Waltke does not consider this the best grammatical option (i.e., the double accusative after verbs of "making" normally does not express purpose). However, in defense of the traditional view, two things should be noted:

a) The second accusative (*ṯōhû*) is preceded by the negative, which changes the situation.

b) The following phrase (the contrast to *ṯōhû*) is a purpose clause. Notice the NIV2011 translation: "He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited." Hence, the point of Isaiah 45:18 is not to deny that the earth came from the hand of God *ṯōhû* in Genesis 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 *ṯōhû* condition. The term *bōhû* (used elsewhere only in Jer 4:23 and Isa 34:11) means "void, waste, emptiness" (so *TWOT*, 92).[65]

Finally, someone might object that the text never attributes this state of *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* to the Creator. There is, after all, no statement that God called forth the state of the earth in verse 2 by His Word ("and God said, 'Let

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[64] Thomas McComiskey, *TWOT*, 396.

[65] *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*."

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 *ṯōhû wāḇōhû*

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

> To this day, the proverbial word pair *tōhû wāḇōhû* 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.[66]

He went on to state,

> It is therefore still legitimate to assume that the word pair *tōhû wāḇōhû* 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 Genesis 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 understand the terms to mean "chaos," an extremely negative state that would not have come from the hand of God. Others see them as implying a more neutral state of being unformed. David Tsumura, in his thorough investigation, contends that the phrase means a state of "unproductiveness and emptiness."[67]

If Isaiah 45:18 is not a denial that God created the earth *tōhû* (as argued above), and there is no explicit indication in Genesis 1 that the state of the earth in Genesis 1:2 resulted from judgment or catastrophe, then there is no reason not to accept the very plausible conclusion that the earth in Genesis 1:2 was simply in a primitive, unfinished state as initially created by God. This position has been defended more recently by John Day, who writes, ". . . the first act of creation is actually described in v. 1, the formation of the inchoate heaven and earth, together with the consequences referred to in v. 2."[68] Furthermore, this view—the traditional view—has had strong evangelical support from Luther, Calvin, Kiel, Leupold, E. J. Young, C.C. Ryrie, and Mark Rooker. It is also endorsed in *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Kautzsch and Cowley, 1432c). The idea of *ṯōhû wāḇōhû* 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. Genesis 2:1 - Does the presence of "darkness" (חֹשֶׁךְ, *ḥōšeḵ*) and "the deep" (תְּהוֹם, *ṯᵉhôm*) in Genesis 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. Being the opposite of light, it may be considered "evil" (Isa 5:20) and is often used in a sense involving "curse" or "judgment" (Job 3:4; Ps 35:6: Isa 47:5; 59:9).

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[66] M. Görg, "תהו *tōhû*," *TDOT*, 15:570.

[67] 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.

[68] John Day, *From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1–11*, 18-19.

Darkness is frequently associated with God's judgment, as in the Day of the Lord (Isa 13:10; Joel 2:31) and even the death of Christ (Matt 27:45). In the NT, John uses darkness to represent that which is opposite of God's character and having fellowship with Him (1 Jn 1:5, 6). Finally, darkness will be removed in the eternal state (Rev 21:25; 22:5). Biblically, then, darkness often speaks of that which is alien to God's holiness.

One might argue that these observations support Waltke's "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.[69]

Furthermore, elsewhere God takes the responsibility for the creation of "darkness": "The One forming light and creating darkness (וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ), . . . I am the LORD who does all these" (Isa 45:7). The same logical point Rooker makes applies equally well to the "deep" (תְּהוֹם, *ṯᵉhôm*).[70] Hence, the presence of darkness and the deep in Genesis 1:2 is not a necessary indication of evil or that the state of the earth is the result of judgment.

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, I might add) that the six days were never intended to be understood as literal 24-hour days and that they did not occur in the sequence in which they are presented. [This is part of the argumentation of those who embrace the "Framework Hypothesis" as discussed earlier.] Those who hold 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 transmitted through space—He could simply have created light already falling upon the earth. In that case, it would have had "apparent age" (reaching the earth after traveling through space), just as the mature trees 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 alluding to 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 reach the close of Scripture, we find this 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. Habakkuk 3:3b–4. God may well have chosen to create light before the sun, moon, and stars in order to distinguish between "light" (often associated with God's holiness and glory) and the "light sources" in

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[69] M. Rooker, "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation? Part 2," 422.

[70] The word "deep" (תְּהוֹם, *ṯᵉhôm*) occurs 36 times in the OT. The word normally refers to 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 (תְּהוֹם) as with a garment." The fact that the LXX translated תְּהוֹם 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 neutral way.

the heavens, since the latter became objects of pagan worship. The God who can do all things would have had no difficulty providing light in this manner.

VII. The Meaning of "Day" (יוֹם, *yôm*) and 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 the word "day" (יוֹם, *yôm*) is used in the chapter. In addition to the Framework View which treats the days figuratively, two other proposals have been offered that supposedly allow God's creative work to unfold over many years—even millions of years:

(1) The Day-Age View

In this view, the word "day" does not refer to a literal 24-hour day but to a long, extended age.

(2) The Intermittent Day-Age View

Here, the word "day" does mean a literal 24-hour day, but long ages are placed between each of the six days.

A. Background and Advocates of the Day-Age Theory

With the rise of geological science in the 1700s, some Christians concluded that creation must extend not merely thousands of years into the past but millions. One way to reconcile this with Scripture was to adopt a different understanding of the Hebrew word for "day" (יוֹם, *yôm*). An early advocate was Arnold Guyot (1807–1884), a Swiss-American scholar who taught at Princeton. Others followed, noting that *yôm* can refer to a period longer than a 24-hour day in certain OT contexts, such as "the day of the Lord" or the summary statement in Genesis 2:4, "the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven." They also appealed to 2 Pet 3:8, which speaks of one day being like a thousand years to the Lord. In general, proponents of the day-age view affirm a literal Adam and Eve and maintain the same sequence of creation events as those who hold the traditional interpretation. Notable adherents include William Jennings Bryan (the opponent of evolution at the Scopes Trial), the American Baptist preacher William Bell Riley, Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe, Stephen Meyer of The Discovery Institute and the director of The Center for Science and Culture, and several respected Christian scholars such as Gleason Archer, Walter Kaiser, Millard Erickson, and J. P. Moreland.[71]

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 cases, it means a literal 24-hour day. Although there are instances where *yôm* refers to a longer, extended period, what is crucial is that whenever *yôm* is paired with a numerical indicator (e.g., "the second day," "forty days"), it always denotes a literal 24-hour day. The statement in 2 Peter 3:8 ("with the Lord one day is like a thousand years") is not teaching that God operates with a different kind of "day," but emphasizing God's patience, as the next verse makes clear.

[71] For a defense of this view, see Hugh Ross and Gleason L. Archer, "The Day-Age View," in *The Genesis Debate*, ed. David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), 123-63 and 189-214. Robert C. Newman—although advocating a variety of the intermittent-day view—also defends *old earth creationism* ("Progressive Creationism," in *Three Views of Creation and Evolution*, ed. J. P. Moreland and J. M. Reynolds, 103-133, 153-58 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999]).

2. At the end of each creation day, the text provides a defining formula: "and there was evening and there was morning, ___ day."[72] This clarifies that *yôm* in Genesis 1 does not mean an age (millions of years?) or "God's workdays," but a normal 24-hour day as humans would understand it. Cf. Exodus 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. Day-age advocates sometimes argue that Day 4 does not describe the creation of the luminaries but their unveiling (i.e., that they were made earlier and only became visible at this point). This explanation, however, does not hold up, because Genesis 1:14 introduces Day 4 with explicit language 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. Hagigah* 12a), and it is evident from their comments that they understood *yôm* in Genesis 1 as a literal 24-hour day.

6. Allen Ross observes that "from the fourth day on, there are days, years, signs, and seasons, suggesting that the normal system is entirely operative."[73] Of great significance, we should note that in Genesis 1:14, "days"—the same Hebrew term used in Days 1-3—are distinguished from "years," indicating that "days" are not long ages. Furthermore, with the sun "to rule the day" and the moon "to rule the night" established on the fourth day (Gen 1:16–18), the days that follow—Days 4 through 6—would almost certainly have been ordinary days.

7. Allen Ross also notes that "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."[74]

The Intermittent Day-Age View, as argued by John Lennox, is equally problematic.[75] This approach does not arise from exegesis, for nothing in the Hebrew text suggests a gap of any duration between the creation days. It is simply conjecture. Objection #3 above—regarding plants existing long before sunlight—applies here as well. Finally, this view stands directly at odds with Exodus 20:11, which plainly states that God made the heavens, the earth, and all their contents in six days.

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

BioLogos is one of the leading proponents of *theistic evolution*.[76] According to their doctrinal statement, they affirm that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God."[77] Yet, inconsistently, they also state, "We believe that God created the universe, the earth, and all life over billions of years," and then assert that God accomplished this through evolution. This immediately challenges biblical authority, for Genesis 1 affirms that the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) did not evolve but were created directly by God. In contrast, William

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[72] Gen 1:6 has "one day" (יוֹם 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.

[73] Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 109.

[74] Ibid.

[75] John C. Lennox, *Seven Days that Divide the World, 10th Anniversary Edition: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021).

[76] In addition to materials found on the BioLogos website defending theistic evolution, see also Keith B. Miller, Mark Noll, et al, *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); and Howard J. Van Till, "The Fully Gifted Creation ('Theistic Evolution')," in *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, 159-218. 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.

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

Barrick highlights the conflict 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."[78]

The question of Adam's historicity among contemporary evangelicals is carefully addressed in the Zondervan Counterpoints book, *Four Views on the Historical Adam*.[79] In this work, four authors present four distinct understandings of Adam:

(1) Denis Lamoureux - No Historical Adam[80]

Denis Lamoureux argues that there was no historical Adam, that Genesis 1–11 is non-historical, and that theistic evolution is a fact. Yet he maintains that this does not undermine the core doctrines of the Christian faith. Lamoureux believes God accommodated His revelation so that ancient peoples—without access to modern science—could still grasp the divine message.

(2) John Walton – "Adam" as an Archetype

For Walton, Genesis 1 does not provide scientific information about human origins, and thus Adam and Eve may or may not have been the first humans or the ancestors of the entire human race. Scripture's primary concern, he argues, is presenting Adam as an archetype representing humanity.

(3) C. John Collins – An Historical Adam but an Old Earth

Collins maintains that Adam and Eve were literal historical individuals, yet he also holds that the earth is billions of years old and that evolution may or may not be correct.[81]

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

Barrick rightly argues that Adam was a literal historical figure through whom sin entered the world. He emphasizes that Jesus and Paul affirmed this belief, and that doctrines such as the fall of humanity, the need for the second Adam (Jesus), the institution of marriage, and the inerrancy of Scripture all collapse without a historical Adam.

It is unfortunate that the historicity of Adam would even be debated today by those claiming to be "evangelicals." A straightforward reading of Genesis 1–3 affirms Adam's historicity, and this is reinforced by Jesus' own comments about marriage "in the beginning" (Matt 19:4–6) and by the Apostle Paul (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45; 1 Tim 2:13). Keathley and Rooker note how central 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

[78] 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.

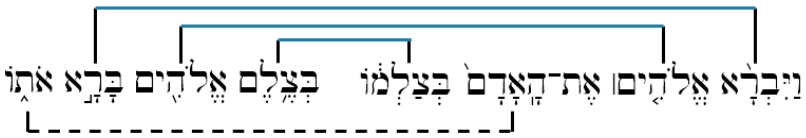
[79] Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

[80] 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). Tremper Longman questions the historicity of Adam and 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. D. Charles [Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013], 122-23).

[81] Cf. Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

> 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.[82]

Fortunately, there are helpful resources supporting the biblical position that Adam was a literal historical person.[83] Not only is this the clear teaching of Scripture, but the creation of Adam and Eve is the culmination and crown of all that God made. Several observations underscore this. First, Genesis 1:26 shifts the divine creative command from "let there be" to "let Us make." Second, mankind—and mankind alone—is made in the image of God (or *as* the image of God).[84] Third, the longest description of any creation day is reserved for Day 6. Fourth, unlike the first five days, only the work of Day 6 is declared "very good" (Gen 1:31). Fifth, verse 27 has a poetic structure, highlighting and elevating God's creation of humanity in His own image.



What we find in Genesis 1–2 are not two contradictory creation accounts, as though the first *tôledôt* section beginning in Genesis 2:4 came from a separate source awkwardly stitched to Genesis 1:1–2:3. (Some argue this on the basis that God is called *Elohim* in 1:1–2:3 but *Yahweh Elohim* from 2:4 onward.) Rather, the author's method is to present a general overview of divine creation in 1:1–2:3 and then—beginning in 2:4—offer a complementary, more detailed account of the creation of mankind, since Adam and Eve were the pinnacle of God's creative work. In doing so, the author underscores that Israel's God, Yahweh—the One with whom Israel is in covenant—is the Creator of everything, including the very things the pagan nations worship.

Genesis 2:7 states that "the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground." Adam's being created from the dust (עָפָר) of the ground (אֲדָמָה) is not merely a biological statement.[85] Merrill explains,

> As a potter takes moistened clay, puts it on the potter's wheel, and then carefully and skillfully shapes it into the vessel of his choice, so the Lord scooped up earth (*ʾădāmâ*) and with deliberate care molded it into a man (*ʾādām*). Man was no accident, then, but the product of an omniscient Potter who crafted him into precisely the being he wanted him to be (cf. Isa. 64:8; Jer. 18:1-6; Rom. 9:21).[86]

When given the divine inbreathing by which he received the breath of life, Adam became a living being. Whatever one concludes about Genesis 2:7, what is unmistakably clear is that Adam was created directly by

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[82] Cited in William D. Barrick, "Old Testament Evidence for a Literal Historical Adam and Eve," 19.

[83] 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/>.

[84] For the latter understanding of mankind created *as* the image of God (not merely *in* the image of God), see Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion; A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 104.

[85] John Walton ("Reading Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology," 166) argues that both the names of the first couple as well as Adam's being created from dust are simply archetypal. Rather than the emphasis being upon man's earthly origin, he connects Gen 2:7 to Gen 3:19: "All of us are made from dust, and all of us will return to dust. It is a statement about mortality (Gen 3:19)."

[86] Ibid., 175.

God. He was not the product of evolution, nor did he arise from any lower hominid species.[87] Furthermore, the Hebrew word for Adam (אָדָם, *ʾādām*) is related to the word for "ground" (אֲדָמָה, *ʾădāmâ*), reminding the man of his earthly origin. This prepares for the later revelation of his ultimate, resurrected body—patterned after the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:47-49, NIV2011):

> [47] The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. [48] As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. [49] And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

CONCLUSION

Although Genesis 1–2 occupies only a brief portion of Scripture, it has generated some of the most intense and extensive commentary in the entire Bible. Throughout most of church history, Christians have generally favored—with only occasional exceptions—a straightforward, literal interpretation: that God created the entire cosmos in six consecutive 24-hour days and that Adam and Eve were the first human beings. This consensus held until the late 1700s and early 1800s, when the age of the earth began to be challenged, first by emerging geological theories and later by Darwin and those who followed in his train. In response, some evangelicals adopted the gap theory of creation, proposing a lengthy interval between the initial creation (depicted in Gen 1:1) and the six-day creation beginning in Genesis 1:3. As scientific theories continued to develop in the secular culture, the biblical account of creation came under even heavier assault. This has resulted in a diverse number of explanations held by evangelical scholars today.

In this paper, ten distinct views are described and considered. Of these, only one maintains the traditional view that Genesis 1:1–2:3 describes the entire creation accomplished in six literal 24-hour days. The other nine, in various ways, allow for the beginning of creation to be situated in the far distant past—some even suggesting a timeline of billions of years. The more radical proposals (such as the mytho-creation view, theistic evolution, and the cosmic temple interpretation) seriously question not only the chronology of the text but, at points, the very historical reliability of the events themselves. Despite these modern pressures, there remain compelling reasons to conclude that the traditional six-day interpretation best reflects the meaning and intent of the biblical text.

Efforts to deny that the early chapters were written in the literary genre of historical narrative remain unconvincing. The *tôledôt* structure of Genesis, the pervasive use of the *waw*-consecutive verbal form, and the absence of Hebrew poetic parallelism all support reading Genesis 1–2 as historical narrative, indicating that the events described, and the language used to describe them, should be understood in their plain and ordinary sense. Arguments appealing to supposedly "fantastic elements" found in early Genesis—events or persons deemed too extraordinary to be real— fail to justify reclassifying Genesis 1–11 as a different literary genre that would permit removing much of its historical content. Moreover, the genealogical threads that weave Genesis

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[87] Much theorizing has taken place—especially in evolutionary discussions—about humanity's supposed rise from lower life forms. This directly affects how fossil remains such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, Neanderthals, and Denisovans are interpreted. William L. Craig has speculated that Adam and Eve "may be plausibly identified as belonging to the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, usually denominated *Homo heidelbergensis*, living perhaps >750 kya" ("The Mytho-historical Adam View," in *Perspectives on the Historical Adam and Eve. Four Views*, ed. K. D. Keathley [Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024], 88). For a more reliable (and biblically compatible) assessment of the origin of *Homo sapiens*, see David Menton, "Did Humans Reallly Evolve from Ape-like Creatures?, in *Searching for Adam; Genesis & the Truth about Man's Origin*, 229-62 (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016); and Marvin Lubenow, "Neanderthals: Our Worthy Ancestors," ibid., 263-86.

1–11 together, ultimately linking God's call of Abraham back to Adam himself, strongly support both the historicity of Adam and Eve and their placement at the beginning of the six-day creation week.

In addition to recognizing Genesis 1–2 as historical narrative, a sound hermeneutical approach also supports the traditional understanding of the creation account. Attempts to read the term "day" (Hebrew יוֹם, *yôm*) in Genesis 1 as "age," or to argue on the basis of a proposed paralleling framework of Days 1-3 with Days 4-6 that the days need not be understood as sequential 24-hour periods, remain unconvincing. Throughout the Old Testament, whenever the Hebrew word *yôm* appears with a numerical qualifier, it consistently denotes a 24-hour day. Moreover, even if some form of parallelism between Days 1-3 and Days 4-6 can be demonstrated (and there most likely is, though not in the manner envisioned by advocates of the Framework Theory), this does not warrant interpreting the days figuratively or non-sequentially.

The decisive hermeneutical consideration should be how Genesis 1–2 is understood and employed by New Testament authors writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For example, Jesus' statement in Mark 10:6—"from the beginning of creation, *God* made them male and female"—clearly indicates that the first human couple was present at the beginning of creation, not after long ages had elapsed as though each "day" in Genesis 1 represented an extended epoch. New Testament usage reinforces the traditional six-day interpretation.

The remainder of the paper considered some of the more salient interpretive issues that bear directly on the proper understanding of Genesis 1–2. It was demonstrated that Genesis 1:1 is not a summary heading for the first major section (Gen 1:1–2:3) but rather records God's initial creative act on Day 1. Verse 2 does not describe a subsequent action following verse 1; instead, it begins with a Hebrew *waw*-disjunctive, signaling a parenthetical description of the earth's condition prior to God's creation of light. The phrase *tōhû wāḇōhû* in Genesis 1:2 does not indicate a catastrophic judgment or chaotic state caused by some external agent or event. Rather, it describes the earth in its primitive, undeveloped condition resulting from God's initial creative act in Genesis 1:1 and is best understood as "unformed and unfilled." From this point, God continues His creative work of preparing earth for man by first giving it *form* (Days 1-3) and then *filling* it with objects and living things (Days 4-6), all of which culminates in the creation of mankind on Day 6. Genesis 2:4 then opens the first *tôledôt* section of the book (Gen 2:4–4:26), expanding on the creation of mankind that occurred on Day 6 and explaining what became of God's remarkable creation—namely, that sin entered and wrought devastation. Yet even this tragic development served the purposes of God, initiating the drama of salvation history that unfolds throughout the rest of Scripture.

When all is said and done, the words God gave to Moses in Exodus 20:9–11 still call for understanding the creation week as six literal 24-hour days, precisely as described in Genesis 1–2:

> [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; . . . . [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.

Genesis 1–2 stands among the most majestic passages in all of Scripture, exalting God as all-wise, all-powerful, infinitely creative, and profoundly loving and gracious toward humanity—whom He commissioned to rule under His authority over the perfect creation He had made. The New Testament further clarifies that all things came into being "in the beginning" through the Lord Jesus Christ. We dare not diminish His glory by obscuring or redefining the very work Scripture attributes to Him.

APPENDIX

1. The Literal Six-Day View

In Defense of:

Beall, Todd S. "Reading Genesis 1–2." In *Reading Genesis 1–2: A Literal Approach."* In *Reading Genesis 1–2; An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles, 45-72. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013.

Mortenson, Terry; and Thane H. Ury, eds. *Coming to Grips with Genesis; Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth.* Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008.

Ross, Marcus R. "The Recent Adam and Eve View: A Modern Young-Earth Approach." In *Perspectives on the Historical Adam and Eve. Four Views*, ed. K. D. Keathley, 149-200. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024.

Lyon, Jeremy D. "Genesis 1:1-3 and the Literary Boundary of Day One." *JETS* 62.2 (2019): 269-85.

In Critique of:

Averbeck, Richard E.; C. John Colins, Tremper Longman III, and John H. Walton. "Four Responses (to Todd Beall)." In *Reading Genesis 1-2; An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles, 60-72. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2013.

2. The Gap Theory View

In Defense of:

Custance, Arthur C. *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2*. Doorway Publications, 1970; reprint, Classic Reprint Press, 2008.

Pember, George H. *Earth's Earliest Ages and Their Connection with Modern Spiritualism and Theosophy*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876; expanded eds., 1900, 1914; reprint 5th ed., Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2012.

Rimmer, Harry. *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*. 10th ed. Indiana: Berne Witness Co., 1940.

In Critique of:

Fields, Weston W. *Unformed and Unfilled*. Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976.

Boaheng, Isaac. "A Linguistic and Theological Assessment of the Gap Theory with Particular Reference to Genesis 1:1-2b." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 1:1 (May 2020): 1-10.

Irons, Lee. "The Gap Theory of Genesis 1:2." *Christian Research Journal* 37:2 (2014). Available online: < https://www.equip.org/PDF/JAP372.pdf>.

3. The Pre-creation Chaos View

In Defense of:

Waltke, Bruce K. "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1–3: Part III: The Initial Chaos Theory and the Precreation Chaos Theory." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (Jul-Sep 1975): 216-28.

Waltke, Bruce K. *Genesis, A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988.

Fouts, David M. *Right from the Start! Calling Evangelical Leadership to Faith in Genesis 1–2.* Courthouse Printers, 2015.

In Critique of:

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

Rooker, Mark F. "Genesis 1:1-3: Creation or Re-Creation?" In *Vital Old Testament Issues: Examining Textual and Topical Questions*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, 11-27. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996.

4. The Promised Land View

In Defense of:

Sailhamer, John H. "Genesis." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Rev ed. Vol. 1: Genesis-Leviticus. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2008.

Sailhamer, John. *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996; reprint, Dawson Media, 2011.

In Critique of:
Kulikovsky, Andrew. "A Review of *Genesis Unbound* by John Sailhamer." *Journal of Creation* 14:3 (Dec 2000): 35-38.

5. Old Earth Day-Age View

In Defense of:
Ross, Hugh. "Old Earth (Progressive) Creationism." In *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, ed. J. B. Stump, 71-100. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.
Ross Hugh; and Gleason L. Archer. "The Day-Age View." In *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. D. G. Hagopian, 123-63. Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001.

In Critique of:
Duncan, J. Ligon; David W. Hall, Lee Irons, and Meredith G. Kline. "Responses (to Ross/Archer)." In *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. D. G. Hagopian, 165-88. Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001.
Chaffey, Tim; and Jason Lisle. *Old Earth Creationism on Trial; The Verdict is In.* Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008.
Ham, Ken; Deborah B. Haarsma, and Stephen C. Meyer. "Responses to Old Earth (Progressive) Creationism, Hugh Ross." In *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, ed. J. B. Stump, 101-119. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.

6. Old Earth Intermittent Day-Age View

In Defense of:
Lennox John C. *Seven Days that Divide the World, 10th Anniversary Edition: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.

In Critique of:
Turpin, Simon. "Review of John Lennox's Book *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science*." *Answers Research Journal* 5 (2012): 89-97.

7. Figurative Days View: The Framework Hypothesis

In Defense of:
Kline, Meredith. "Because It Had Not Rained." *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1957/58): 146-57.
Kline, Meredith. "Space and Time in the Genesis Cosmogony." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48:1 (Mar 1996): 2-15.
Irons, Lee; with Meredith Kline. "The Framework View." In *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, ed. D. G. Hagopian, 217-56. Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001.
Blocher, Henri. *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*. Trans. David G. Preston. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

In Critique of:
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