



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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Thought Provokers:

The Evolutionists seem to know everything about the missing link except that it is missing.

G.K. Chesterton.

The solitary, sublime, simple reason the Bible gives for the existence of everything in all creation is that it came into being by God's will, because he chose that it should. For the unbeliever, no further explanation is possible; for the believer none is necessary.

John Blanchard

To create requires infinite power. All the world cannot make a fly.

Thomas Watson

How long ...?

By

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

If you have ever undertaken a trip with a young child you will, no doubt, have come to fear those six words ... *How long* till we get there? The answer to junior's question may not be readily known. However, by consulting a sign post or map, an answer can be given that will satisfy—at least for the next five minutes.

In the Creation/evolution debate a similar question is asked, namely, how long are the days of Creation? Are they normal days or long periods of time? Should we understand them literally or symboli-

cally?

Like our situation with junior, we too can consult the relevant information and find an answer to that question. The signpost yielding that information is God's Word, the Bible.

1. How long is a "yom"?

Most of the debate revolves around the interpretation of *yom*, the Hebrew word for "day." In examining the first two chapters of Genesis we find that the word *yom* is used often. However, because it can mean a whole host of things (See Table 1.) it does not prove

conclusive, by itself, in answering our question.

This should not concern us. Think for a moment of the English word "day" and how many different uses it has: "Good day!" "What a day!" "Daylight," Daytime." It can refer to a twenty-four hour period, as in Monday, which obviously encompasses both day and night. It can approximate a twelve hour period, as in "daytime," and refers to the period in which the sun is in the sky. A person can be having a "bad day" even though the only a few hours have elapsed. A "day to day" task does not necessarily

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certain parameters.

- The immediate context.
- Other uses of the word by the same author.
- How others before us have understood the text.

2. Other Words

In viewing the text of Genesis one, we note the repetition of the phrase “evening and morning.” This is our first clue as to how we should interpret the word *yom*. We noted that *yom* has a range of meanings. The same is not true of *bohker* (morning) or *ehrev* (evening). Although these words have a shade of meaning, as do our English equivalents, it is ever so slight.

Allow me to explain. You would agree, that there is a big difference between “period of time” and “day.” However, the difference between words such as, dawn, sunrise and first-light, or between twilight, sun-

yom was defined by a rotational sequence of light and dark.¹

3. The Context

Turning out attention to the immediate context, we find that Genesis chapters one and two deal with creation and the imposition of order. The heavens and the earth were formless and void. It will help here to think of a potter who has just placed a lump of clay onto his wheel. He has before him a mass that does not resemble anything. So it was when God created the heavens and earth. First God created. Before Him lay only the raw material—a formless void. *God's second action was to impose order and design upon this chaos.*

This is significant in that as we progress through the first six time segments of Genesis one, we see that God imposes more order upon His creation. In other words, the movement is from

take a day to complete. These are, dare we say, everyday uses of our English word. Hebrew is no different.

This then raises the question, how

from the vague to the specific; from the general to the particular.

So it is that we have the creation of light on the first day, but the luminaries and other stars are not cre-

ated until the fourth day.² This theme then flows on until we have a complete creation. Then, from Genesis 2:4, the text describes in even greater detail aspects about plants, animals

Table 1 The different words used by the Authorised Version to translate the Hebrew word "yom".

Day 2008	Time 64	Chronicles + 1697 37	Daily 32	Ever 17	Year 14	Continually 10	
88.3%	2.8%	1.7%	1.4%	.75%	.6%	.4%	
When 10	As 10	While 8	Full 8	Always 4	Whole 4	Alway 4	Misc 44
.4%	.4%	.35%	.35%	.18%	.18%	.18%	1.8%

do we solve the problem before us if the word *yom* is inconclusive? It simply means that we must look to other areas. Typically we would look at things such as:

- Other words that may define

set and dusk are ever so slight. In essence they all refer to different aspects of the one event, and are so closely related that they can be used interchangeably.

What this then tells us is that the

1. Light was created and separated from the darkness on the first day of Creation. The luminaries or light bearers, i.e., the sun and the moon, were not created until day four. This does not create a problem as the Hebrew words do not necessarily relate to the rising or setting of the sun. They more generally refer to the setting of darkness (evening) or to splitting of darkness (morning). After day four of creation week, these terms would have then been associated with the activity of the sun.

and man.

Therefore, it is clear firstly, that chaos was but a starting point, and could by no means be considered the norm. Secondly, it is evident that a rotational system of day and night

you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the *first day* you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

unless some type of set calendar was in place? A calendar that they would live through several times!

You see, the major hurdle faced by those who believe in long ages, is that there is no key given in Genesis

Table 1 A comparison of the English, Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament.

English	Hebrew	LXX	Usual meaning
Day	יֹם (yom)	ἡμέρα (hay-mera)	Time between sunrise & sunset. 24 hour day.
Evening	עֶרֶב (eh-rev)	ἑσπέρα (hes-pera)	Coming of dark/Evening
Morning	בֹּקֶר (boh-ker)	πρωί (proh-i)	Early in the day/Morning

that would indicate that the first two chapters should be interpreted differently from the others.

Those who argue for long ages note that Genesis one has a different literary

was in place from day one.³

4. Other Texts

It is now appropriate to approach other uses of the word *yom*. Consider the following texts also penned by Moses:

- *Gen. 2:17*: “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, *for in the day* that you eat from it you shall surely die.”
- *Gen. 7:4, 12*: “For *after seven more days*, I will send rain on the earth *forty days and forty nights*; ... And the rain fell upon the earth for *forty days and forty nights*.”
- *Ex. 24:18*: “and Moses was on the mountain *forty days and forty nights*.”
- *Ex. 12:15-17*: “*Seven days*

And on the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the seventh day; ... for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance.”⁴

Here the point is simple. How can any of these texts be interpreted with any sense, if literal twenty-four hour days are not intended? What does God mean when He says to Adam, “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the long and unspecified time period that you eat from it you shall surely die?” How can Noah prepare for something that is seven unspecified periods of time away? How is it possible for the Israelites to make a feast over long periods of time? Likewise, how are they to observe these days as a perpetual reminder

style—a style not repeated anywhere else in Scripture. From this point they then argue that the text cannot be interpreted literally. Yet we are forced to ask the question, why not?

Certainly, Genesis one does have a different form, but this does not mean that the text cannot be taken literally—or are we forced to conclude that water is not water; land is not land; fish are not fish; plants are not plants; stars are not stars, etcetera, etcetera? Nor is it acceptable to dismiss the text in this way when there are other plausible explanations for the different literary style.

5. How others have viewed the text

As we consider the question before us, we need to remember that writers are faced with a choice of

2. Note also that the lunar creations of day four are to govern days, years, and seasons. If days are long periods of time, then how long are years—the Hebrew word only means year—and what are seasons?
 3. Or at the very least such a system was in place from day four when the sun and moon were created. However, it must be remembered that a rotational system of day and night is not dependent upon the light carriers themselves.
 4. *The New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977, Logos Library System. Emphases added.

words. So too are translators. When the English Bibles were written, much work went into selecting the word that most closely allied the original word *chosen* by the Biblical writer.⁵

For example, the English translators chose the word “day” to translate “yom”. Why did they do this when they could have used words such as “age”, “era”, and “time”? The same question can be asked of the translators involved with the Septuagint (LXX). This Greek version of the Old Testament was penned sometime in the third century B.C. and gives us another, and much earlier, insight. Here again the translators used the common word for day (hay-mera). They too could have spoken about “time” (chronos) or about “ages” (aion), but they chose to use haymera.

Why did they do this? Firstly, it was apparent that this word was the best equivalent available. Secondly, it is obvious that the translators believed that the text was referring to

a normal day.⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion then, we can confidently assert that the early chapters of Genesis do indeed teach us that the days of creation were normal 24 hour days.⁷ Further we can be confident that these early chapters deal with reality and not myth.

Creationism has come under attack, not because of insurmountable scientific evidence, but because of liberal theology. A theology whose god is too small to do anything supernatural, and too uncaring to give this world the Redeemer, and too lazy to give the world revelation in the form of propositions truth.

Therefore brethren, do not be shaken by the cries of the world or the liberals. Neither give credence to God’s Word. Neither believe in God. Thus, we should ignore them both. We have a sure foundation for our faith. Our God has spoken. His Word does not change. In fact, His Word is

eternal and that Word is Jesus Christ. “For *this* is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,” and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;for they [the world and the liberals] stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.⁸

5. It must be remembered that the Biblical writer chose, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), to use the common word for day when there was a choice of other more vague terms.

6. One must not forget that the Biblical authors penned the same words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Again the question arises, why did the Holy Spirit and the Biblical writers use the common Greek and Hebrew words for day, when these languages were more than capable of expressing vague and indefinite periods of time?

7. All the arguments used in this article deal with Genesis. It must not be forgotten that creation is spoken of in many other verses in Scripture. Their weight only serves to make the case even stronger.

8. 1 Peter 2:6-10. *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.