

# 16 Clues in the Text of Genesis 1 Indicating that Creation is Ancient

(Page numbers pertain to my extended essay on the same topic, “*The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look*,” by Pastor Gary Jensen)

## Setting Forth an Entirely Appropriate Standard

**“Since Scripture stands as the final judge and norm...every member of the Synod has the right and responsibility to test...adopted resolutions and statements (just below) lest these statements be guilty of ‘teaching as doctrines the commandments of men [as opposed to God].”** This We Believe: Selected Topics of Faith and Practice in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), Introduction, p. vii (boldface mine).

## The Failure to Face an Entirely Appropriate Standard

So in answer to the question, “*Was the universe created in six literal 24-hour periods?*” the LCMS replied, “*Unless there is compelling reason on the basis of the biblical texts themselves...we are to believe God created the world in six 24-hour days.*” (*Frequently Asked Questions – The Bible*. www.lcms.org). \*\* Similarly, Dr. Steven Boyd, who is fluent in six ancient Mideast languages, declares that “*obviously*” the Genesis days were 24-hour (YouTube: “*Why Genesis is Truly History*,” 19:49, 04/08/20). \*\* Likewise, Martin Luther (Luther’s Works, v.1, “*Lectures on Genesis*”), insisted on 24-hour creation-days. **Nevertheless**, all three of these **parties fail to acknowledge, let alone reconcile**, their views with any of the *specifics* of the Hebrew grammar of Genesis 1:1-2:4 (below). Although they all insist that the interpretational choices concerning this passage are limited to either 24-hour days **or** non-historical poetry, this tactic naively commits the *black or-white*; aka *excluded-middle* fallacy by insisting that if the days aren’t 24-hour, they do not qualify as history. Yet I will substantiate to the contrary, on the basis of the unique *particulars* in the Hebrew text, that Genesis 1 is *historical prose* that employs “day” to convey six eons of unspecified, yet finite, duration. Since the above parties ignore this evidence, they further commit the intellectual error; the “*fallacy of exclusion*.” Yet even though the *standard* definition of “day” is clearly 24-hour, the unique *specifics* of the text of Gen. 1 indicate that “*God-Days*” are an **exception to the general “rule.”**

## The Biblical Data

1. In Genesis 1:1, **the entire cosmos** (earth, moon, sun, stars, and galaxies) came into existence as **God’s first act of creation** over the course of **an unspecified time period** (which may entail billions of years). Since the first *word* in v. 2 is the preposition, “*and*” (*waw*-Hb), that detail means that v. 2 cannot be the first verse of the *narrative*. It instead means that v. 1 must be part of the narrative too, which, again, I repeat, recounts the **first stage** of the creation *narrative* (pp.4,5).
2. Accordingly, the “*two lights*” that were made visible (*not bara, but yehye*-Hb—a distinction young-earth creationists (YECs) habitually fail to make) from earth’s surface on Day 4, already existed in 1:1 (p.5).
3. When Moses summarized God’s creation week (Gen. 2:4a), he employed the term “*generations*” (*toledoth*-Hb) as opposed to “*days*,” which hints that these six creation time periods in Gen. 1 did not conform to *24-hour days* (p.6).
4. Yet 2:4b, says that **all things** were made, not in a week, but in “*a day*” (*beyom*-Hb-p.6).
5. There is **no official rule** of Hebrew grammar which specifies that numbered days must be 24-hour (see Hosea 6:2 as a counter-example).
6. Day 3 yields *contextual* clues which imply a passage of time far greater than a 24-hour period. For example, it narrates *cyclical* processes (by means of participles) of plants; from their sprouting out of the “earth” to subsequently developing to a level of maturity that culminates in

bearing fruit. The absence of any allusion to *accelerated* development further implies an extended timeframe (p.6). Likewise, the lengthy list of duties that were assigned to Adam on the 6<sup>th</sup> Day (Gen. 2:19-20) requires a protracted measure of daylight far longer than a 24-hour day can yield (p.5, IV, c).

7. No definite articles (“the”) accompany the first five creation days. The Hebrew text rather says, “*Day 1...a 2<sup>nd</sup> Day...a 3<sup>rd</sup> Day, etc.,*” which renders them **non-specified** days (p.6).

8. For the reason of the direct-object markers in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, the Hebrew grammatical rule, “Accusative of Time,” applies to both passages. Consequently, YECs insert the preposition “*in*” (*be-Hb*) into English translations in order to bolster their view that the creation days are 24-hour, despite the fact that the preposition is **not present**. I do not deny that the wording, “*for in six days,*” is a possible *interpretation* of these verses. Yet it is not a secure *translation* for the reason that the context is not duration, but rather the pattern of 1 day out of 6. Numbers 14:34, for example, employs **unequal** comparisons (40 **years** of punishment for 40 **days** of disobedience).

Even if it were granted that, “*in six days,*” is a valid interpretation, that would not in itself overthrow the possibility that “days” meant eons. For one thing, no other Hebrew word existed which could convey long time-periods while still having an end point. For example, the only close exception in Bible times, “*olam,*” meant “everlasting.” (Hugh Ross. *A Matter of Days*. (RTB, 2015), p.67).

9. The grammatical construct of the refrain, “*there was evening and there was morning...*” is so structurally at odds with the biblical delineation of a *standard* day (“**from evening to evening**” – Lev. 23:32) that it serves instead to highlight the **glaring distinction between the two**. Such a refrain is also a conceptually incoherent way to specify the length of a day of any kind whatsoever.

10. **NO grammatically-parallel “evening/morning” passages exist** in the Old Testament which even remotely demonstrate that the Creation Days must be 24-hours each (pp. 6-7).

11. The appearance of the “two lights” which had been hidden by heavy clouds (1:2) but now appeared on day 4 can easily be reconciled with points 1 and 2 (above). On the other hand, the YEC view that they were first created on the 4<sup>th</sup> day, cannot be reconciled with point 1 (above).

12. Genesis 49:26, Deuteronomy 33:15, Habakkuk 3:6, and 2 Peter 3:5 all describe creation as ancient while not a single Bible passage specifically states that it is young.

13. Ramifications following from death by Adam’s sin (Gen. 2:17) were limited in scope to the human race (Rom. 5:12). Among *animals* by contrast, death was an entirely *natural* occurrence from the beginning at creation—see Ps. 104:21 (this Psalm refers to creation; not the Fall) (p.10).

14. Genesis 1 nowhere specifies exactly **how** God made or formed anything. Yet it does suggest in 1:11, 20, and 24 that God freely employed secondary causes (“*Let the earth [and ‘waters’] bring forth...*”) which may well have entailed extended passages of time.

15. The Bible opposes the YEC position of rejecting science if it seems to conflict with their view of Genesis. Indeed, it expressly **forbids suppressing the testimony of nature** (Rom. 1:18-20).

16. As for interpreting certain unusual passages, since *omniscience* is central to Yahweh’s essence as God (Jer. 23:24), depictions of Him doing a “surgery” to separate Eve from Adam (Gen. 2:21f.), and later searching for them in the garden (Gen. 3:8f.), are clearly figurative; NOT literal.