

The Days of Creation

by Rev. Tom Aicken

There are Christians who say that they believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life, and yet they don't believe that the events of Genesis 1-11 really happened, or at least not in the way that we're told and not in that time-frame. Without offering any evidence, they describe those chapters as poetic and tell us that the genuine account of history begins with chapter 12. Were Adam and Eve a mere figment of poetic imagination? If so, what does that tell us of all the prophets and apostles who clearly believed in their existence and the critical role they played in human history? If the account of Adam and Eve is poetic, little more than a nursery rhyme, from what sprang the fall of man into sin? From what tragic event have we come to inherit death? How is it that we see the evidence of God's wrath hanging over the whole created order? And last, but by no means least, what are we to make of Christ, the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), if the first Adam is historically irrelevant?

Over the last several decades I have heard a number of creationists, mostly scientists who had been atheists, testify that they came to Christ, not only as a result of their hearing the gospel but, with that, seeing the biblical message – yes, Genesis 1-11, as well as all that follows – to be most consistent with the facts of observable science. There is overwhelming evidence, for instance, that the earth is only thousands (not billions or even millions) of years old, and it's very convincing evidence if people care enough to consider it. God has given us both special revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (creation) – we see His stamp and established testimony in both – but it seems that even many professing Christians are not rooted enough in the first, or familiar enough with the second.

The days of creation are an example to consider. Shall we first presume the evolutionary view to be true, supposing it to be proved by science, and think that this is therefore how God really brought everything into being? If we do embrace that view, we're bound to conclude that the days of Genesis 1 (if they teach us anything at all) must each be millions of years. Oh, but hang on a moment. If the Bible is the Word of God, as all credible Christians say they believe, would it not be better to start with what God Himself has revealed, resting on what He has told us, not on the presumption of what must be pseudo-science if it dares to

contradict it? This principle is set out in Romans 3:4, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." What, after all, set Abraham apart and declared him to be approved of the Lord? It was the fact that he believed God (Genesis 15:6).

But how can we be sure that the six days of creation each cover a period of 24 hours, what we call solar days, and that this is what Genesis 1 is really intended to teach? Well, let's look at the text carefully. Each day, notice, includes an evening and a morning, so what else could they be but solar days? If the Hebrew language uses repetition to give emphasis and particular focus, and if Genesis 1 tells us six times that these days each consisted of an evening and a morning, is it not abundantly clear that they are solar days, that they could not be anything else?

Here are a few facts worth noting: (1) Every time the word 'day' appears with a number in the Bible, such as "the third day," it is always a solar day, not a century, a millennium or a million years. (2) 'Evening' and 'morning' are used together without 'day' 38 times outside Genesis 1 and it always means a solar day. (3) And 'Evening' or 'morning' are used 23 times with 'day' outside Genesis 1, and again it always means a solar day. (See The Creation Answers Book for further details.)

Ah, but there is more to demonstrate that these days of Genesis 1 were solar days. In Genesis 2, for instance, we're told that God rested on the seventh day (that is, He stopped working on the task which He had now completed), and so blessed the day and sanctified it, which is to say that He made the seventh day (the weekly Sabbath, a day of rest) a holy day. Notice, from the beginning the seventh day was declared a holy day, and in Exodus 20 it was legislated for all to observe. Need I point this out? This seventh day of the week, the Sabbath later changed to the first day, is not millions of years long!

I know there are people who will read into any passage of the Bible whatever it is they want to find there, such a practice is known as eisegesis, but changing the plain teaching of Scripture can only lead to serious error. Let me give you a case in point. In Daniel 8, some 400 years before this prophecy was fulfilled, we read of how Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria would storm the city of Jerusalem, slaughtering as many Jews as he could, and then utterly desecrate the temple in order to defy the God of Israel. This time of desecration was to last 2,300 days (Daniel 8:14). In 1818, William Miller offered his own interpretation of that prophecy. He claimed that the 2,300 days represented 2,300 years. And, clocking

the time from 457 B.C., he believed that this was really a prophecy, not of Antiochus but of Christ and the end of the world, which prophecy he (and other Adventists) had come to predict would be realized on 22 October, 1844.

That date came and went, of course, but the Lord's Christ did not. That date – 22 October, 1844 – later came to be known by Adventists as “the Great Disappointment.” Rather than lose all their followers, however, Hiram Edson soon claimed to have a vision correcting the earlier prophecy, not that Christ would return in 1844, but that He would merely move at that time from one room of the heavenly temple to another where He would begin a new phase of His work. Ellen G. White claimed to have a vision of her own shortly after, a vision which she said confirmed Edson's correction. Out of that, in turn, grew the “Investigative Judgment” theory, a very detailed account of Christ's work in this other part of the temple.

Do you see what happens when we start making things up and then have to cover our tracks to conceal the error? The 2,300 days of Daniel 8 (called evenings and mornings, v.26, and therefore solar days) brought about, not the end of the world but the end of Antiochus' reign of terror as predicted. In 165 B.C., after just 6 years and 3 months, or 2,300 literal days in all, Antiochus Epiphanes was defeated, the sanctuary of the temple was cleansed, and true worship was restored in Jerusalem!

I want to acknowledge that the Bible does sometimes use poetic language, metaphors shrouded in symbolic expression, and a prime example of that is the Book of Revelation. When the apostle John was in exile on the island of Patmos he received a series of visions regarding the resurrected Christ and His ongoing work, visions which were pictures of both future and frequently recurring events which were soon to be witnessed on the world stage.

The Book of Revelation was intended to be, not a detailed account of these events but a comfort to the people of God, a comfort that, despite those trials and tribulations which would surely come their way, the Lord Jesus was in control of everything that happened and would continue to work all things together for their good. As such, this book doesn't name specific events or give precise times of their occurrence, all of which belongs to God's secret counsel, but reveals just enough (sometimes using familiar imagery from Old Testament prophecies) to

assure believers of the Lord's promise that He will never leave them nor forsake them. At the same time, Revelation was also intended to be a warning to the wicked and unbelieving, a warning that, in spite of their apparent successes and achievements in life, they were really on a collision course and needed to cast themselves on the mercy of the Lord while they still had time to do so.

However, what is made abundantly clear throughout the record of these several visions of Revelation is the deliberate use of poetic language, language which is revealing and concealing at the same time. The consummation of history is not uncovered in Holy Scripture in the same manner as its book of beginnings – in what we see by looking ahead instead of looking back – and hence the Book of Revelation, a prophetic revelation, is not written in the same literary style as the historical narrative of Genesis 1-11. The Scriptures must be read as they present themselves, and, as Christians, let's seek to discern and appreciate both the content and the manner by which these things are made known to us.

If you are a Christian, one who has always embraced the notion that the days of Genesis 1 must have been long periods of time, believing the narrative that science has proved the earth to be old, let me challenge you to reassess those presuppositions and to test everything you believe by holding it up to the Word of God. Don't assume that, because scientists make statements, those statements must be the result of scientific investigation rather than the product of their own presuppositional bias. And don't assume that if enough people say those same things, or if they are endlessly repeated, they must be true (see 1 Thessalonians 5:21,22).

If, though, you are an unbeliever, I implore you by the mercies of God to seek the Lord while He may be found, to call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6-9). You need to know that no one comes to God the Father except through faith in Jesus Christ His Son (John 14:6), and that the Lord Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). But do come to Christ, unbeliever, come early – you don't know when the opportunity to do so might be lost forever; give your life to Him with all your heart and commit yourself, not just to those parts of the Bible which may appeal to you, but to every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).