

Scientific Challenges to Genesis 1 – The Fourth Creation Day

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day. (Gen. 1:14-19 NIV)

Any correlation between the Bible's creation story and accepted science appears to abruptly and conclusively end on the fourth day. The initial reading of the events clearly contradicts our understanding of the universe. While the Bible states that the Earth was created on the first creation day, the fourth day contains the creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Or so it seems.

Consequently, the fourth day poses a logistical problem for the Biblical reader. Is the Bible claiming that the Earth formed before the sun and stars?

It is noteworthy that the Hebrew word for "create" used in the very first verse of the Bible ("In the beginning, God *created* the Heavens and the Earth") is not present in the original Hebrew text of verses 14 through 19. The text does not state that God "created" the sun, the moon, and the stars; instead, it reveals that He "made" them. Some scholars argue that the translation is better rendered as "had made," and that there is a significant difference between "create" and "make."

In Genesis 1:1, God created light on the first day. The most obvious source of this light is the sun. Consequently, the sun was created on the first day.

So what exactly is happening on the fourth day?

Note that the Biblical text does not only announce the appearance of the sun, the moon, and the stars. It also denotes their purpose, both explicitly and implicitly.

They are to cast light onto our planet, and to separate the day from the night. The sun is the primary source of light on planet Earth. Without it, life is unsustainable. Of course, the moon emits no light of its own, but merely reflects the light from the sun.

Another declared purpose of these heavenly bodies is to “serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.” Mankind has depended on these natural signs for thousands of years. The seasons, the harvest, and many holidays and festivals are determined by the positions of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Familiar stars and groups of stars have aided travelers at night since the beginning of recorded history.

In addition, a careful review of the passage reveals that the Bible does not even address the sun and the moon by their formal names. Instead, they were designated “the greater light” and “the lesser light.” By deliberately avoiding their names, the Bible categorically refutes the divine significance attached to them. Nearly every ancient culture believed that these celestial bodies were of a divine nature. However, the Bible does not recognize these ancient gods. Instead, it places the sun, the moon, and the stars among the Hebrew God’s creations.

The primary concept that the Bible was trying to convey on the fourth day is that the God of the ancient Hebrews – the One and only true God – was the Creator of the sun, the moon, and the stars. He made these heavenly bodies to benefit mankind, not to govern over us.

I believe it is acceptable to disregard any scientific solution for the fourth day. The verses do not convey any natural or physical process in the Earth’s history. The power of this passage is not science, but theological.

Here, the Hebrew God declares that the celestial bodies were His creations, and they possess no divine powers of their own. At that time, it was a revolutionary concept – one deserving of an entire creation day.

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