**Is Genesis 1 Literal, Literalism, or Literalistic?**

by Simon Turpin on May 2, 2016

**Abstract**

*Young earth creationists, or rather biblical creationists,[[1]](#footnote-1) are often accused of being over literal in their interpretation of Gen 1. Regrettably, this accusation caricaturizes this position as a “literalistic interpretation,” which is unfortunate since biblical creationists explain their hermeneutic as “grammatical-historical interpretation.” This paper will argue that, when we read Gen 1 in its context, it should be understood as a historical account which teaches that God created everything in six 24-hour days.*

**Introduction**

The discussion over the days of creation is often shaped by the way it is framed by those who caricature the biblical creation position. For example, OT scholar C. John Collins often uses the “literal” approach to Genesis in a negative way:

I have given reasons against a literalistic reading of Genesis, and this literalistic reading is the one on which the supposed conflict is based.[[2]](#footnote-2)

By stereotyping our position as “literalistic,” Collins and others try to show how it is wrong, advancing their own interpretation as the correct one.

When it comes to reading the material in Gen 1–11, Collins believes the “author was talking about what he thought were actual events, using rhetorical and literary techniques to shape the readers’ attitudes towards those events.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Crucial to his discussion of Gen 1–11 is how he defines history. Collins describes Gen 1–11 in its form as “history like”[[4]](#footnote-4) with a “historical core.”[[5]](#footnote-5) For Collins, Gen 1–11 is historical in the sense that the events recorded within it actually happened.[[6]](#footnote-6) However, the description of those events is symbolic since the author uses rhetorical and literary techniques. The high level of (supposed) figurative and pictorial language means that the passage, therefore, should not be seen as literal.[[7]](#footnote-7) In fact, Collins constantly warns against a literal reading of Gen 1–11.[[8]](#footnote-8)

I will argue that the literary genre of Gen 1 should be understood as a historical account, events that took place in time-space history, which teaches that God created everything in six 24-hour days. I will then deal with the main objections to this, specifically looking at Days One, Four, and Seven.

**Literal Interpretation of Genesis 1?**

The understanding of *Gen 1* by biblical creationists is that the events of Gen 1 are a reliable, historical account of the creation of the world and humanity since they were divinely revealed by God to Moses (Ex 20:11, 31:17–18).[[9]](#footnote-9) Because all Scripture is God-breathed (2Tim 3:16), it is trustworthy and authoritative when it comes to history, and thereby is trustworthy in the scientific inferences from that literal history (e.g., since the earth was created before the sun, according to Gen 1, the earth did not evolve by the laws of chemistry and physics from a solar gas cloud around the sun).[[10]](#footnote-10)

Biblical creationists interpret Gen 1 using the historical-grammatical approach, which means taking the text plainly according to its literary genre. This approach understands Gen 1 as historical narrative, which of course takes into account such things as metaphors and figures of speech (Gen 2:23, 4:7, 7:11). The plain meaning may be understood as “the meaning intended by the human author, as that sense can be plainly determined by the literary, and historical context.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Therefore because of the negative connotations associated with a “literal” interpretation of the Bible and Gen 1, it is better to say “grammatical- historical interpretation.”

**Genesis 1**

The interpretation of the Gen 1 account of creation is crucial in understanding discussions about evolution and the age of the earth. For example, if Gen 1 teaches that creation took place in six 24-hour days, which indicates a young earth, then it rules out the millions of years claimed as fact by secular scientists for the age of the earth.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Literary Genre of Genesis 1**

The literary genre of Gen 1 has been a much-debated issue among old-earth scholars who have given a number of suggestions to consider: legend,[[13]](#footnote-13) myth,[[14]](#footnote-14) poetry,[[15]](#footnote-15) theological history,[[16]](#footnote-16) hymn,[[17]](#footnote-17) and exalted prose narrative.[[18]](#footnote-18) There are, however, several compelling reasons to believe that Gen 1 is a historical narrative[[19]](#footnote-19) portraying real events that took place within six 24-hour days (Ex 20:11, 31:17).

First, the literature of Gen 1:1-2:4 is plainly a narrative[[20]](#footnote-20) albeit with extraordinary content; in that sense it is “a unique piece of literature.”[[21]](#footnote-21) The fact that Gen 1 is “a unique piece of literature” however does not indicate that it is a unique genre. Gerhard Hasel correctly states, “It is hardly *sui generis* [unique] in an exclusive literary sense which will remove it from communication on a factual, accurate and historical level.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

At a grammatical level, the Hebrew verb forms in Gen 1 show that it is a narrative.[[23]](#footnote-23) The *waw*-consecutive “is an essential characteristic of narrative adding to the past narration an element of sequence. . . . It appears 55 times in the 34 verses in Gen 1:1–2:3.”[[24]](#footnote-24) If “the text was not meant to be taken sequentially, why did the biblical writer employ this narrative device so freely?”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Furthermore, while there is debate over artistic features in Gen 1, there are convincing textual indicators that it is not poetic.[[26]](#footnote-26) Gen 1 “contains little or no indication of figurative language. There are no tropes, symbolism, or metaphors.”[[27]](#footnote-27) What is more, one of the main characteristics of Hebrew poetry is missing, namely, parallelism.[[28]](#footnote-28) This is seen in the Psalms, for example, where a statement is made and then the same idea or its opposite is said in different words. So Ps 19:1–2 (NIV), an example of synonymous parallelism, says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.” Such construction is not found in Gen 1. Nevertheless, even if it were demonstrated that Gen 1 is a poetic text, this would not mean that it cannot also be an accurate revelation of details of actual history.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Others have argued that because Gen 1 contains symmetry,[[30]](#footnote-30) it is not a normal historical narrative but rather is an “artistic arrangement”[[31]](#footnote-31) whereby its emphasis is theological not historical.[[32]](#footnote-32) The literary theorists, however, propose a false dichotomy between history and theology. Why can’t the text be addressing both? The Bible’s historical claims cannot be separated from its theological claims. Yet even if Gen 1 does contain symmetry, “Why, then, must we conclude that, merely because of symmetry arrangement, Moses, has disposed of chronology.”[[33]](#footnote-33) The symmetry that has persuaded many scholars of the literary arrangement in Genesis is the supposed parallels between the days:[[34]](#footnote-34)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Environment** | **Contents** |
| Day 1 Light | Day 4 Luminaries |
| Day 2 Water and sky | Day 5 birds and sea creatures |
| Day 3 Land and plants | Day 6 Land animals and man |
| Day 7 Sabbath |

However, when examined carefully, the supposed parallels between Day One through Day Three and Day Four through Day Six are not there:

Light on Day One is not dependent on the sun, as it was created on Day Four. Secondly, the waters existed on Day One and not only on Day Two.

Water was made on Day One, but the seas were not made until Day Three. The sea creatures of Day Five were to fill the “waters in the seas,” which were created on Day Three, not Day Two.

On Day Two it was not the sky that was created but the expanse *raqia* to separate the waters below from the waters above.

On Day Four we are told that God made the sun, moon, and stars and placed them in the expanse *raqia* (Gen 1:17) created on Day Two, not on Day One.

Man was created on Day Six not to rule over the land and vegetation (Day Three) but over the land animals created on Day Six and the sea creatures and flying creatures created on Day Five.

Unfortunately, the literary theory, a more “sophisticated” approach to Gen 1, seeks to de-historicize the text. Furthermore, it has to be asked “whether the Israelites thought of this text in only literary/theological terms. This view risks reductionism and oversimplification.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck sums up how Scripture speaks of the creation account:

When it speaks about the genesis of heaven and earth, it does not present saga or myth or poetic fantasy but offers, in accordance with its own clear intent, history, the history that deserves credence and trust. And for that reason Christian theology, with only a few exceptions, continued to hold onto the literal historical view of the creation story.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Secondly, the plain reading of Gen 1:1–2:3 is that the text describes events that took place in six 24-hour days that occurred in time-space history.[[37]](#footnote-37) Gen 1:1–2:3 then “should be read as other Hebrew narratives are intended to be read—as a concise report of actual events in time-space history.”[[38]](#footnote-38) This is the natural exegesis of the text and the one that is meant by the author.[[39]](#footnote-39) When it is read this way, it is clear what the author is asserting, namely, that God created everything in one week. Using other passages that speak to the same topic assists in determining the proper interpretation since Scripture will never contradict itself. Ex 20:11 and 31:17 make it clear that the events of Gen 1:1–2:3 occurred in six days, just as the text plainly reads. Additionally, the passage informs us that mankind was created on Day Six (Gen 1:26–31), and Jesus confirmed this (Mk 10:6).[[40]](#footnote-40)

Thirdly, this interpretation comes from the text and not by imposing outside ideas on it, such as evolution[[41]](#footnote-41) or ancient Near Eastern literature. This was how most scholars understood Gen 1 before the eighteenth century, including the Jewish historian Josephus,[[42]](#footnote-42) the early church fathers Lactantius and Basil the Bishop of Caesarea,[[43]](#footnote-43) as well as the Reformers Martin Luther[[44]](#footnote-44) and John Calvin.[[45]](#footnote-45)

**Objections to Twenty-Four Hour Days**

**Day One**

Concerning Gen 1:1–5, Walton states, “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.”[[46]](#footnote-46) This is because Walton understands Gen 1 to be about functional ontology rather than material creation. Crucial to this understanding is his belief that Gen 1:1a is a literary introduction to the seven days of creation.[[47]](#footnote-47) He suggests that Gen 1:1 is outside the seven days and therefore should be read as “In the inaugural period . . . God created the heavens and the earth, and this is how he did it.”[[48]](#footnote-48) For Walton this means *bereshit* (“in the beginning”) refers to a period of time (the entire seven-day period), not a point in time (the first moment of Day One).

Although Walton may be correct that *bereshit* refers to a period of time, he gives no evidence for his assertion that it is the entire seven-day period of Gen 1. Moreover, as Andrew Steinmann points out, the initial period that *bereshit* refers to

is later defined in Gen 1:5 as “one day,” the first day of creation. . . . This is signalled by the fact that Gen 1:1 is tied to Gen 1:5 by a series of conjunctions that runs consecutively from Gen 1:1b to Gen 1:5: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth *and* the earth was an empty wasteland *and* darkness was over the face of the deep *and* the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters *and* God said . . . *and* there was light . . . *and* God saw . . . *and* God separated . . . *and* God called . . . *and* the darkness he called . . . *and* there was an evening *and* there was a morning: one day.” The sequence is not halted until the abrupt phrase “one day” brings it to an end. In Gen 1:1a this period could not be called “day one” because until the account of the creation of light and the resultant evening and morning there was no “day.” It could only be called “the beginning period” until the creative work of the first day was completed.[[49]](#footnote-49)

In the context of Gen 1:1, the use of the word *bara[[50]](#footnote-50)* presents us with the bringing into existence of something new—that is, the heavens and the earth are brought into material existence.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The next question is whether the first day starts in v.1 or v.3. C. John Collins argues that

the creation account makes no claim about how old the universe is or about how old the earth itself is, since the author does not specify how long God waited between verses 1 and 2 . . . it makes no claim about how long the creation period was, because it is noncommittal about how long the days were.[[52]](#footnote-52)

However, the verb *bara* in v.1 is in the perfect tense form and in v.3 the *waw*-consecutive verb is used. V.2begins with a *waw*-disjunctive,[[53]](#footnote-53) which explains what the earth was like when God first created it.[[54]](#footnote-54) Consequently, this means that the account of events begins in v.1 and continues through to v.3. V.2 is a parenthetical statement and therefore is not part of the sequence of events but rather describes the original condition of the earth.[[55]](#footnote-55) The initial period is also defined in Gen 1:5 as “one day”[[56]](#footnote-56) the first day of creation. Moreover, Ex 20:11 states that God made everything in six days, which means that He did not make anything prior to the first day. And the verse says He made the earth during those six days. So this is further evidence that Day One begins in Gen 1:1, not 1:3.

**Day Four**

One of the main objections to interpreting the days of Gen 1 as 24-hour days is that since the sun is not created until Day Four, the first three days cannot be ordinary days. Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham states,

Astronomical knowledge makes it difficult to conceive of the existence of day and night before the creation of the sun. . . . It must, therefore, be supposed that the first three days were seen as different.[[57]](#footnote-57)

However, this is not a problem with the text but is based on the presupposition that the sun is necessary to have a day marked by evening and morning. But to have an evening and morning on the first three days, all that is needed is a light source, which God created on Day One (Gen 1:3), and a rotating earth. These should not be called “solar days” as the word “solar” means “related to the sun.” But they were 24-hour days. Hamilton acknowledges that

The creation of light anticipates the creation of sunlight. . . . What the author states is that God caused the light to shine from a source other than the sun for the first three “days.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

The Bible tells us that God created light on Day One (Gen 1:3), yet it does not tell us what the source was. God is not dependent upon the sun to produce the phenomenon of light. Paul, for example, was blinded by a source other than the sun on the road to Damascus (Act 9:3). The Bible also states that God is light (1Jn 1:5).

**Day Seven**

C. John Collins argues that the lack of the refrain “evening and morning” on the seventh day is a reason not to understand it as an ordinary day[[59]](#footnote-59) and therefore “makes us question whether the other days are supposed to be ordinary in their length.”[[60]](#footnote-60)

This interpretation, however, misunderstands the use of the refrain throughout the creation week. It is important to keep in mind that God completed His creation on Day Six.[[61]](#footnote-61) The seventh day was not a day of creation but a day of rest (Gen 2:3). In each of the first six days there is a structure, which is not mentioned on the seventh day, to shape each of the days:

1. “God said . . .”
2. “Let there be . . .”
3. “There was . . . ”
4. “God saw that it was good.”
5. “There was evening and morning. . .”[[62]](#footnote-62)

Because Day Seven is not a day of creation but a day of rest, it is not necessary to use the evening and morning formula used in Day One through Day Six since it has a “rhetorical function that marks the transition from a concluding day to the following day.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Yet it is not only evening and morning that is absent from Day Seven, but the other parts of the formula are also absent. The formula is used to describe God’s work of creation. The formula is not used on the seventh day because God had finished creating (Gen 2:1–3). Furthermore, no terminator is needed for the seventh day, like the others, since the terminator to this day is the *toledot* (Gen 2:4) as the next section of the narrative is about to begin.

The fact that Day Seven is numbered is further evidence that it is a day of 24 hours (Gen 2:2–3).

**Are we in the Sabbath rest?**

Collins argues that Day Seven is unending because we are still in God’s Sabbath rest. He cites Jn 5:17 and Heb 4:3–11 to support this claim.[[64]](#footnote-64)

If the seventh day is unending, then this surely raises a serious theological problem: how could God curse the creation (Gen 3) while at the same time blessing and sanctifying the seventh day?[[65]](#footnote-65) The idea of being blessed and cursed at the same time would have been foreign to an Israelite audience as they understood that if they obeyed God’s commands they would be blessed, and if they disobeyed them they would be cursed (Dt 28).

The use of Jn 5:17 and Heb 4 to show that the Sabbath day continues to the present day proves no such thing. Jn 5:17 says, “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’” In context, Jesus is referring to God’s providential and redemptive work, not His creative work. The verse says nothing about the seventh day continuing. Heb 4:3 is referring to the spiritual rest that all believers enter into through faith in Christ. Heb 4 quotes Gen 2:2 and Ps 95:7–11, and these are used by the author as an argument to warn of the danger of unbelief. Again, the text does not say that *the seventh day* continues but rather that *God’s rest* (from His creation work) continues.

**Days of Creation**

The key point in understanding the length of the days in Gen 1 is that they are in fact numbered and are used with the qualifiers “morning” and “evening.” Those contextual clues help us comprehend their meaning. In conclusion, the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, according to the text, are normal, 24-hour days, just like the days recorded during Noah’s Flood or the twelve days of sacrifice for the dedication of the tabernacle (Nu 7:10–84) or the three days that Jesus was in the grave. Even those who disagree, such as John Walton, acknowledge this.

I am unpersuaded by the argument that the interpretation of *yom* in Gen 1 can refer to long periods of time. It is true that *yom* has a variety of diverse uses, but diversity in the semantic range does not give the interpreter the freedom to choose whichever use suits his or her purposes. Our attempt must always be to identify the meaning that can be supported as the one the author intended. I consider it likely, given the kind of use manifested in Gen 1*,* that the author had a twenty-four-hour period in mind.[[66]](#footnote-66)

From an understanding of the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11[[67]](#footnote-67) this seven-day week would have occurred around 6,000 years ago,[[68]](#footnote-68) thus ruling out any interpretation that tries to accommodate the current evolutionary framework of cosmology, geology, and anthropology with the Scripture.[[69]](#footnote-69) Therefore, the time frame that the Bible gives for God creating the world rules out any old-earth or evolutionary interpretation of Gen 1.

**Conclusion**

Biblical creationists often refer to their interpretation of Gen 1 as “literal.” However, because of the caricature and negative connotations with this label, it is better to describe it as a grammatical-historical interpretation. Moreover, by and large, the objections to [Gen 1](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%201.1) being understood as a straightforward historical account are primarily driven by the desire to make it fit with an evolutionary view of the world. However, when read in its context, the literary genre of Gen 1 should be understood as a historical account which teaches that God created everything in six 24-hour days. This is clearly the plain or straightforward interpretation of Gen 1 and is the only hermeneutic that gives a logical and internally consistent theological foundation that does justice to the Biblical text and the theology that flows from it.

<https://answersingenesis.org/hermeneutics/is-genesis-1-literal-literalism-or-literalistic/>

1. Although this position is often referred to as young-earth creationism, we understand this to be the position that is clearly presented in the Bible. See “[Don’t Call Us Young-Earth Creationists . . . .](https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/young-earth/young-earth-creationists/)” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2006), 255. Some of the reasons Collins gives against a “literalistic” interpretation of the days of creation can be seen in Days One and Seven below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why It Matters* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid., 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid, 17, 20, and 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, 33–35, 58, 85, 92, and 124. Unfortunately, Collins does not define what he means by *literal*, which leads to his caricaturing of the “literal” position as “literalism” (154). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This does not take away from the human dimension of Scripture since God used humans to write down the message (1Pe 1:21). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See article 12 in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: “We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood” (“The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” (1978), 5, <http://www.etsjets.org/files/documents/Chicago_Statement.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Moises Silva, “Has the Church Misread the Bible?” in *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation: Six Volumes in One*, ed. Moises Silva (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1996), 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Key to understanding the age of the earth is the global (not local) Flood described in Gen 6–8 (especially revealed in [6:13](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%206.13), 6:17, 7:11–12, 7:17–24) and by the NT authors (Lu 17:26–27; 2Pe 3:5–6). The fossil record is largely the evidence of Noah’s Flood rather than being evidence of millions of years. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Gunkel described Genesis as a legend: “Legend is not a lie. Instead it is a specific genre of literature. Legend—the word is employed here in none other than the generally acknowledged sense—is a popular, long-transmitted, poetic account dealing with past persons or events.” Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), vii–viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 40; John Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 27–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Walter Brueggeman, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Know Press, 1982), 26–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Tremper Longman III, “What Genesis 1–2 Teaches (and What It Doesn’t)” in *Reading Genesis 1–2: An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013), 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15. Vol. 1*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 44. Collins calls it an “exalted prose narrative” in order to allow for the possibility of a non-literal hermeneutic. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Iain Provan argues that Gen 1–2 is not a narrative and has no interest in chronology. His argument against Gen 1 being chronological is that “day and night exist before there is a sun and moon. ” Provan, “‘How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains It to Me?’ (Acts 8:30–31): Evangelicals and Biblical Hermeneutics,”*Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17:1 (2007): 16. I will deal with this argument when I look at Day Four. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Claus Westermann identifies Gen 1:1–2:4a as a narrative. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*(London, United Kingdom : SPCK, 1984), 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Kenneth Mathews states that although Gen 1 “comes closest to ‘narrative,’ we must conclude that it is a unique piece of literature.” Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Gerhard Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figurative ‘Periods/Epochs’ of Time?,”*Origins* 21, no. 1 (1994): 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Dr. Steven Boyd has undertaken a statistical study on the frequency of the *wayyiqtol* in narrative and poetical accounts and shows based upon the distribution of verb forms that Gen 1 is definitely a narrative and not poetry. Steven W. Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1–2:3: What Means This Text?,” in Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 163–192. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” in *Coming To Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, eds. T. Mortenson and T. H. Ury, (Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books, 2008), 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1–25:18*, vol 1., *An EP Study Commentary* (New York, NY: Evangelical Press, 2003), 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 32; Hasel, “The Days of Creation in Genesis 1,” 19–21; Walter Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 80–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Currid, *Genesis 1:1–25:18*, 39; Robert V. McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” in Mortenson and Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis . . .*, 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See E.J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), 82–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ps 78 and 136 recite some of the key events of the history of Israel in poetic form. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Waltke argues that the symmetrical nature of [*Genesis 1*](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%201.1) indicates its non-literal nature. Bruce Waltke with C. J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 76–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Blocher, *In the Beginning*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 383. For a thorough refutation of the Framework view of creation, see McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” 211–249. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For example, many scholars are convinced of this symmetry: Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 6–7; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 115–16; Waltke, *Genesis*, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2009), 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation Volume Two*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 495. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Claus Westermann understands what Gen 1:1–2:3 clearly implies: “The average reader who opens the Bible to Gen 1 and 2 receives the impression that he is reading a sober account of creation, which relates facts in much the same manner as does the story of the rise of the Israelite monarchy, that is, as straightforward history.” Claus Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*, trans. E. Wagner (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1–2:3: What Means This Text,” 191. In another work Boyd has given fifteen proofs that the authors of biblical narratives (including Genesis) were speaking about real events:

(1) God’s people are defined in terms of their past; (2) God’s people are commanded to keep the memory of their past alive; (3) God’s people engage in retrospection on their past; (4) the remembrance of the past devolves on the present and determines the future; (5) customs are elucidated; (6) ancient names and current sayings are traced back to their origins; (7) monuments and pronouncements are assigned a concrete reason as well as a slot in history; (8) historical footnotes are sprinkled throughout the text; (9) written records used as sources are cited; (10) precise chronological reference points are supplied; (11) genealogies are given; (12) observations of cultic days and seasons are called acts of commemoration; (13) prophetic utterances are recalled and related to events in the narrative; (14) “time” words challenge ancient readers to validate historical claims made in the text; and (15) historical “trajectories” link different portions of the text and widely separate historical periods. Steven W. Boyd, “Statistical Determination of Genre in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for an Historical Reading of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” ICR (2005): 631–734, <http://www.icr.org/i/pdf/technical/Statistical-Determination-of-Genre-in-Biblical-Hebrew.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Though choosing not to believe that Gen 1 was real history, James Barr understood that it was indeed the intent of the author. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Terry Mortenson, “Jesus, Evangelical Scholars, and the Age of the Earth,” *Answers in Depth* 2 (August 1, 2007): <https://answersingenesis.org/age-of-the-earth/jesus-evangelical-scholars-and-the-age-of-the-earth/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Bruce Waltke states, “Contemporary scientists almost unanimously discount the possibility of creation in one week, and we cannot summarily discount the evidence of the earth sciences.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 77. However, majority vote does not determine what is true. Also, what then should be our response given that the majority of contemporary scientists discount the possibility of someone rising from the dead, walking on water, and turning water into wine? Why don’t Waltke and others like him reject these things because of scientific consensus? [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. W. Whiston (London, United Kingdom: Ward, Lock & Bowden, 1987), 1.1.1; 1.3.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See James R. Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth,” in Mortenson and Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips with Genesis . . .*, 26–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works Volume 1: Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5*, ed. J. J. Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 3–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. John Calvin, *Genesis* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Banner of Truth, 1984), 78, 105; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2nd ed. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 90–91, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Walton, *Genesis*, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Walton argues that Gen 1:1 is a literary introduction: “The Biblical account begins with Gen 1:1, which is not a description of any actual activity of God. . . . Gen 1:1 serves as a literary introduction to the subject matter that the chapter is going to discuss, stating the activity that God will be involved in.” John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Andrew Steinmann’s review, “Lost World of Genesis One: John H. Walton American Evangelicals and Creation,” *Lutheran Educational Journal*, March 9, 2012, <http://lej.cuchicago.edu/book-reviews/lost-world-of-genesis-one-john-h-walton-american-evangelicals-and-creation/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Because of his functional approach to the text, Walton argues that the verb *bara* “is not a material activity but a functional one.” Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis 1*, 42. However, Walton has failed to see how the verb *bara* is used within the text of Gen 1. The verb *bara* occurs only in four verses in Gen 1:1–2:3 (Gen 1:1; 1:21;1:27[3x]; 2:3). In the context of Gen 1, it is used in these four places in order to designate God’s bringing something new and unique into existence. See Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The heavens and earth are material creation. See Neh 9:6; Ps 102:25; Is 42:5, 45:12,18. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 83b. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Mathews for a defence of this traditional understanding of Gen 1:1–2. Mathews, Gen 1–11*:26*, 136–144. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. In Gen 1:2 the earth is without form and void. However, 1:3–31 will tell of how God formed and filled up His creation in vv.1,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Gen 1:5 does not say “the first day” as in most English translations, but “one day,” *yôm ’eḥād* which is qualified by evening and morning which make up one day. See Andrew Steinmann, “אחד As an Ordinal Number and the Meaning of Genesis 1:5,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 4 (2002): 577–584, <http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/45/45-4/45-4-PP577-584_JETS.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 22. Old Testament scholar Kenneth Mathews offers the same objection to the days being six consecutive 24-hour days. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Collins states, “Its absence [the refrain] from the seventh day is so striking that an adequate reading must account for it.” Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. The definite article is used here for the first time on the sixth day to indicate the completion of the work of creation upon that day. See Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. This structure is identified in McCabe, “A Critique of the Framework Interpretation of the Creation Week,” 225–227, 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Collins, *Genesis 1–4*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See John C. Whitcomb Jr., “The Science of Historical Geology in the Light of the Biblical Doctrine of a Mature Creation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 36 (1973): 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. John Walton, “Reading Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology,” in *Reading Genesis 1–2: An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013), 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. For a persuasive analysis and defence of a no-gap chronology in Gen 5–11, see Travis R. Freeman, “Do the Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies Contain Gaps?” in Mortenson and Ury, eds., *Coming To Grips with Genesis . . .*, 283–313. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Theophilus of Antioch, Augustine, and Calvin came to similar conclusions about the age of the world from the chronological information in the Bible. Theophilus of Antioch, “Theophilus to Autolycus,” <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/theophilus-book3.html>; Augustine, *City of God* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 484; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 90. In recent times Gerhard Hasel calculated from the Masoretic text that the creation took place at 4178 BC. Gerhard Hasel, “The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11,” *Origins* 7, no. 2 (1980): 53–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The current scientific paradigm of the origin of the universe is in the realm of historical science and not observational science. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)