**Introduction**

In Genesis 1:1 we read “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” As Douglas Kelly says:

The writer of Genesis could not have made a broader statement than that. ‘Heavens and earth’ is a way of saying ‘everything that exists’, whether galaxies, nebulae or solar systems; all things from the farthest reaches of outer space to the smallest grain of sand or bacterial microbe on the planet earth; absolutely everything was created by God. … ‘He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible.’ ‘All things’ include the various ranks of angels, and every form of life from whales and elephants to viruses. ‘All things’ include every form of energy and matter; the speed of light, nuclear structure, electromagnetism and gravity, and all the laws by which nature operates. ‘All things’ come from what God was doing in Genesis 1:1. Behind the creation of ‘all things’ stands the Living God. … Then Genesis 1:2-31 gives a more detailed account of how God created ‘all things.’ (D. Kelly)

When it comes to Genesis 1:1, the church of Jesus Christ, throughout her history, has stood united in affirmation, adoration and wonder. And for eighteen hundred years the verses that follow were also studied and regarded upon face value and meaning. “Theophilus was the first Church Father to stress the fact that the days of creation were literal days. This seems to have been the view of Irenaeus and Tertullian as well, and was in all probability the common view in the Church.” (Berkof, p. 126) But the question of the creation of time and its relation to material space occupied the Church Fathers as well. Augustine became known for his particular views on this. He was utterly mystified by a God whose power is so great that when he speaks creation can come into existence in an instant and yet God chose to describe his creation as in 6 days. When the debate over the idea of eternal creation arose, Anselm took the position that perhaps it might be necessary to conceive of these days as different than our own. But it needs to be remembered that as Augustine and Anselm regarded their understanding of the days of Genesis 1, their only context was the wonder and worship of an infinite God. By the time of the Reformation, however, there was no debate – “[t]he Reformers held firmly to the doctrine of creation out of nothing by a free act of God in or with time, and regarded the days of creation as six literal days.” (Berkof, p. 127) And, even though there is some dispute today over the wording of the Westminster Confession of Faith – whether they be definitive or conciliatory - it states that

“It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.” (WCF IV.I.)

But with the coming of the nineteenth & twentieth centuries, other explanations were proposed regarding how we are to understand the work of God in creation. We would like to be able to say that these proposals were presented with the same motivation as Augustine and Anselm - out of an unhindered and pure study of the Word of God. But the truth is that all of these newer proposals came – in one fashion or another – from the rise not only in the sciences themselves but in the confidence of science – in both professional and educational circles - theories and presumptions made in the name of science that seemed to convince everybody. As the structure and implications of the theory of evolution began and continued to take shape, a revolution in all the major fields exploded - as well as in theology - in an effort to reinterpret those fields in the light that was being cast from millions if not billions of years in our past. With appreciable sympathy, we report that the church was not invulnerable to the pressure to conform and adjust.

There was the ‘Gap Theory’ of early Dispensationalism which attempted to explain the creation of angels and the fall of demons – a subject not otherwise mentioned in Genesis 1-2 – suggesting that there was an unwritten but nevertheless strongly suggested gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The outspoken purpose for this theory was to explain the origin of these spiritual beings. The quiet allowance, however, was for a veritable unknown amount of time to pass between God’s initial work of creation and the time he finally got down to the business of creating man. In more bold circles was the ‘Day/Age’ theory known as Theistic Evolution which openly directed thinking away from six literal days of creation and toward interpreting the days as ages. This presented a symbolic view of the amount of time involved. *[With] the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* as Peter says (2 Pet. 3:8, ESV), and the days of creation might be representing the differing phases that took place again over untold, unmeasurable amounts of time.

Of more recent vintage is the interpretation called the ‘Framework Hypothesis’ which is, to this day, not only accepted but is a favored son among many Reformed seminaries and, therefore, among many of the aspiring young men graduating from those schools and entering into the pulpits of many Reformed congregations. ‘The Framework Hypothesis’ is the interpretation of Genesis 1 insisting that time is not in view at all – that Genesis 1 is to be read and appreciated as historical literature but not literal history. How long or short the days might be is totally irrelevant. Genesis 1 does not speak of time, we are told, but of kingdoms created in parallel with those who rule those kingdoms. Framework’s major proponent, Dr. Meredith Kline, argues, as we would say, that creation is supernatural but not too supernatural, personal but not too deliberate. Genesis 1 is poetic but not truly Hebrew poetry, prose but a highly unusual, even unique kind of prose. God is, indeed, the creator of all things, and he did, indeed, create all things *ex nihilo*. But both of those topics are left outside – Genesis 1 does not deal with those matters directly – therefore, neither should we. Reading and understanding the Genesis text literally only disengages and distracts the student from the true meaning and expression of the writer and his intentions.

**Where do we start?**

What are we to think of the opening chapter and verses of the Bible? How does our understanding of the days that we find here effect our thinking and our theology elsewhere? As I begin this conference, it will be my objective to walk us through the first chapter of Genesis and lay the groundwork for a solid understanding of this account as God has clearly given it to us.

But first, we need to stop and ask ourselves a question. We have already heard of several different ways theologians approach this chapter and what interpretation they impress upon it. How do we know whether they are wrong and we are right? Is there anything that will guide us in our own examination of these things and give us some objective exegetical standards? I believe we have two such standards to guide us. First and foremost, is a fundamental principle of Reformed exegesis which is taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. I.IX.:

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

Plainly speaking, this means ‘Scripture interprets Scripture.’ Whatever my conclusion is about a fundamental matter of doctrine, it must needs be verified by the testimony of Scripture in other places, for God is not only the singular Spiritual author of the whole but God’s message and purpose for the whole is singular as well.

The second standard has to do with my hermeneutic. There are many kinds of writing in the Bible – poetry, prose, prophecy, song, history, parable. My approach to each of these will have to be different in order to gain the proper meaning. So, I have asked myself this question, ‘Does Scripture give me any direction or key as to how I should understand the writings of Moses?’ I believe the answer to that question is ‘yes.’ I believe we find it in Numbers 12.

The most likely time that Moses would have had the opportunity to sit down and write out the first five books of the Bible was during the forty years wandering in the desert regions of the Sinai Peninsula. And during that general time there arose several confrontations from among the Israelites challenging Moses’ role as leader of the people. One in particular came from his own family – his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam. They demanded of Moses: *“Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?”* (Num. 12:2, ESV) When the Lord heard this, he called the three of them to come and stand before him. And this is what the Lord God said.

*And he said, “Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Num. 12:6-8, ESV)*

This, we believe, is our instruction as to how to read the books of Moses – openly and not in dark sayings, not with the form of a vision but in a straight-forward manner. And by this guide we will attempt to lead you now through the days of creation.

**Exegesis -** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1, ESV)*

In Genesis 1 we have the description of something happening. The opening verse tells us what it is. The one true God, who lives from all eternity and to all eternity, creates everything that exists outside of himself. Immediately, therefore, a contrast is plainly struck that makes the story of creation absolutely different from other religions and myths of the origin of all things. Also, the God that Moses holds up and reveals is fundamentally different than the idols and deities worshipped in the nations around him. Here there is a definite distinction and separation between the Creator and the created. Moreover, there is also a contrast between God’s nature of order and perfection on the one hand, and the chaos, the formlessness and meaninglessness of the earth’s primary existence on the other. The God who is stands apart from the creation that becomes.

Could there be more here than just Moses’ candid description – given by the Holy Spirit – of what took place? Could there be other reasons for expressing creation the way Moses has chosen to do? Some have proposed that this opening chapter of Genesis is written by Moses as some sort of polemic – a response to the religions of Moses’ day - particularly, perhaps, against Egypt. Egypt worshipped the sun god Ra and it is theorized that Moses is writing specifically to counter that cult. ‘You worship the sun,’ Moses is said to be thinking, ‘but we worship the God who called light to exist.’ Also, there are other creation myths in the Ancient Near East that Moses might have known about and, perhaps, he even drew from them. How much effect would such things have on Moses’ intention in writing and does that suggest that Moses has in mind something other than displaying a literal six-day story of creation? When we examine those pagan epics we find that they have a distinctive literary flavor to them. Gilgamesh, for instance, was a literary myth and is not written to be understood chronologically. Why should we think differently, the question is posed, about what or why Moses wrote?

We think there was a polemic in the writing of Genesis 1 and we will have more to say about that toward the end of this address. Let us just say for now that we do not think it is the same kind of polemic that these others have in mind. Moses never wrote anything for himself or to express himself other than to be used as a tool to reveal the Word of God to the Israelites and, through them, to the world. Moses is not writing a competing theology. He is not posing Yahweh over against Ra as if this were just a debate. The polemic of Genesis is simply this: there is no other god. Consequently, there is no other act of creation. And this is how it happened.

**1**

**The First Day**

**Day One - Gen. 1:3-5**

The first thing God created was light. Genesis 1 clearly states there was light before the sun. As John Calvin says,

“[This] did not … happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. To nothing are we more prone than to tie down the power of God to those instruments, the agency of which he employs.” “Therefore the Lord, by the very order of creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon.”

Ps. 119:130 says “The unfolding of Thy words gives light.” It is even theologically significant to us as Christians of new birth that the light of God’s Word is not at first associated merely with the object of its later provision. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 4:

*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6, ESV)*

And it is the light that receives the first moral judgment: the light is ‘good.’ It is not ‘physically impossible until scientifically explained,’ nor is the light created before the sun by random chance and is, therefore, absolutely void of meaning. It is, indeed, the first clue in all of Scripture regarding the personality of God, the moral character of God, and the sovereign purpose of God for his creation. If we want to treat the story of Genesis 1 merely as a metaphor, an anthropomorphism, then what are we to do with this pronouncement? Is ‘good’ to be defined polemically, ie., in response just to what the Egyptians believed was ‘good’? Will we just shrug our shoulders and confess that we must allow ourselves to be agnostic at this point saying that God ‘just is not very clear as to what he means here,’ as so many seminarians are doing when they appear before presbyteries for examination and licensure? Should we simply say that ‘good’ has yet to be defined and that we must be content to leave it there in hopes that one day evolutionary science will soon politely inform us not only what ‘day’ means but also what ‘good’ means? Our understanding or our misunderstanding of Genesis 1 does not begin with the word ‘day’ but with the word ‘good.’ If this is to be understood literarily then there simply cannot be any history in it at all. No, our first understanding about God’s work is that his Word is powerful and sovereign. He speaks and light comes into being. It is good as the Lord made it to be good and it paves the way for the rest of the good creation to come.

The first manipulation of the created order is to separate light from darkness. Notice that this is not described poetically or platonically – the darkness is not called evil to contrast with the light which is called good. Moses is not striking a balance between good and evil as if they already existed outside of or alongside of God and the rest of creation. This is the bringing of cosmos out of chaos, order out of disorder, purpose out of meaninglessness. And the division of light from dark is a supernatural act. This is not the ‘big bang.’ Even the darkness exists by God’s ordination. Isaiah 45:7 talks of the Lord who forms light and creates darkness. Psalm 74:16 sings *The day is Yours, the night also is Yours. You have prepared the light and the sun.* (my emphasis)” Jeremiah 33 says:

*“Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time,then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. (Jer. 33:20-21, ESV)*

The next thing God does is give the light and darkness names. Notice that the first time the word ‘day’ is used, it is not a factor of time. It simply names the light and it is so named before the cycle of evening and morning begins. Then, the two are set in motion. There is a cycle, a pulse to creation, there is movement. “By separating light from darkness God ordained day and night as alternating sequences of radiant light and a withholding of that light.” (Aalders)

Now, one very common objection to a literal reading of Genesis 1 is regarding the fact that light, even the cycle of day and night, is already in place before the sun is created. ‘You see,’ we are told, ‘here is evidence that Genesis 1 is not meant to be read literally. It is just a polemic against those who worship the sun by saying that the real God is the one who exists behind the sun.’ I cannot help but picture Moses and the High Priest of Ra sitting across the table from one another debating this very point.

**High Priest**: ‘Moses, I have to admit, you have me here. This God of yours creates light without the aid of the sun. If such a God truly exists, my deity is not the one we should worship. But tell me, is this true? Did your God really do this?’

**Moses**: ‘Well, no. Of course, not. You cannot have light without the sun! That is just a literary device to prove the superiority of my deity!’’

So much for Moses’ powerful polemic!

Now, I am no scientist or astronomer, but consider this: even today, we understand that the passing of years is measured by the earth’s orbit around the sun. But the cycle of day and night is experienced by the earth’s own rotation – we face the light in the daytime, we turn away from it at night. Perhaps the cycle, the pulse of creation began as no more than this – that when God did make the earth, he immediately set the globe spinning. Henry Morris agrees:

“Such a cyclical light-dark arrangement clearly means that the earth was now rotating on its axis and that there was a source of light on one side of the earth corresponding to the sun, even though the sun was not yet made. It is equally clear that the length of such days could only have been that of a normal solar day.”

Another objection to a literal reading of Genesis 1 is the dispute regarding the word ‘day.’ It can and very often does mean a literal 24 hour period in Scripture. But Scripture also uses the word ‘day’ to speak of a much longer time, a season, perhaps, or even longer. And you do not have to go far to see such a use. In Genesis 2:4, the word ‘day’ appears to be used to include, at least, all 6 actual days of creation: *in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens*. But consider this:

“Sometimes ‘day’ is used in Scripture to indicate a general period of time not precisely defined (as in Job 7:6, ‘My days are vanity …’; or Psalm 90:9, ‘Our days are passed away in thy wrath’.) But in such cases, ‘day’ still means a finite succession of normal days: not, by any stretch of the exegetical imagination, vast ages. ‘Day’ can also occasionally be used of a portion of the year such as wheat harvest (Gen. 30:14), but here again, nothing other than a few weeks limited duration of normal solar days can be intended: not thousands or millions of years.”

Furthermore, “[w]hen modified by a number or ordinal (as ‘Day One’ or ‘Day Two’) its universal Scriptural usage means normal solar day. … Further confirmation of Genesis ‘days’ as plain, solar days is provided by the reason annexed to the fourth commandment (‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy’) in Exodus 20:11: ‘For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.’ The crucial point here is that God’s creative work, followed by rest, forms the pattern of wholesome life for His image-bearer, mankind. … That must be a major reason why God created over six days rather than in a split second … “(Kelly, pp. 107-109)

Perhaps Augustine missed that commandment.

The fourth commandment is also a real problem for the Framework Hypothesis. Dr. Kline does insist that Moses’ true motivation for framing creation within the structure of a 6-day period was to emphasize the need of the people of Israel to understand the importance of the Sabbath Day.

Of greater significance for the life of man than these merely literary devices is the Sabbathic pattern of the over-all structure of Genesis 1:1-2:3. For the Creator’s way in the day that he made the earth and the heavens must be the way of his image-bearer also. The precise ratio of man’s work to his rest is a matter of following the chronological structure of the revelation in which God was pleased to record his creation triumph. (Kline, WTJ, 20(1958), p. 154)

While I appreciate greatly Dr. Kline’s emphasis on the importance of the Sabbath Day, and even his desire to stress the theme of the Sabbath as a pattern over the entirety of the creation account, it seems plain that his hypothesis does not accomplish that purpose. Man, we are told, is to practice the pattern of six days for work and one day for holy rest. And why? Precisely because God did not? God did not really take 6 days to make the world and, furthermore, the seventh day, as Dr. Kline teaches, never really ended. This begs the question: if God through Moses only borrowed the pattern of a 7 day week for his creation framework, who was it that came up with the idea of the 7-day week in the first place? Instead of explaining to us how the 7-day week has been given to us by God, the Framework Hypothesis does not know where it came from.

[Ex. 20:11] provides a crucial problem for the framework theory. The non-literal approach argues that the six days are not to be taken literally but are merely a framework in terms of which the events are reported. Why is this framework used? Sometimes this is represented as another anthropomorphism. God's creative activity is described in terms of a human work-week. However the fourth commandment says the precise reverse. God's activity is not described in terms of man's. Rather man's work-week is shaped by God's activity. (Pipa, p. 13)

Is Moses’ powerful theological polemic against Egypt’s silly deities built on something he, in fact, just borrowed from them? Can it be any wonder, then, that as seminary students, persuaded by the argument of the Framework Hypothesis, plead for more and more latitude in Christian freedom on the Lord’s Day and less and less for the honoring and holding forth of the holiness and the blessing and the joy of the day? But I think that if you read the text the way it is written and believe what you read, you will discover that the argument for man’s keeping of the Sabbath is made much more strongly than if you pretend that what you read is not real but just a parable to help you understand what you are not specifically told.

And, just as important to our understanding of the word ‘day’ is the name he gave for the darkness: ‘night.’ Reference to night is even more consistent throughout Scripture in referring to a literal, nocturnal part of the 24 hour cycle. In fact, the only exceptions that I was able to find were John 9:4 where the departure of Jesus from the earth is referred to as ‘night’ coming, and Romans 13:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5 which speak of the coming judgment of God as being a time when there will be no more night. Those exceptions speak for themselves.

So, what kind of time frame could Moses have in mind here? If this truly is history and if the light is called ‘good’ by God, can we truly assume that the ebb and flow of ‘good’ covering centuries or eons - measuring time as we do today - are countered by centuries or eons during which there is an absence of ‘good’? No. The verse simply leaves us no room for this. Instead it ends with a very important statement: *And there was evening and there was morning, the first day*. Now there is some exegetical discussion as to whether this should be called ‘one’ day or ‘the first’ day. But that does not matter. What I am suggesting here is that we have something much more critical. What we have here is God’s supplying us, right from the start, with the very definition of word ‘day’ – a day, God tells us, is to be measured in terms of the cycle of evening and morning.

**2**

**The Second and Third Days**

**Days Two and Three - Gen. 1:9-13**

What occurs on the second and third days include more of the necessary separations that occur in anticipation for future life on earth. Psalm 104 recounts the activity of this day demonstrating for us how Scripture can relay true history in true poetical fashion:

*At your rebuke they fled;  
    at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.  
8The mountains rose, the valleys sank down  
    to the place that you appointed for them.  
9You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
    so that they might not again cover the earth.*

*(Ps. 104:7-9, ESV)*

Now the Framework Hypothesis has raised questions about this day and to that we must now turn. In Genesis 2:5, we are told, we find a conflict of detail which leads us to conclude that the two chapters are irreconcilable if chapter one is to be interpreted literally. The argument is a complex one and I will not take the time this morning to deal with it exhaustively. The essence of it, however, is this. Genesis 1 relates to us the account of the third day and the separation of the waters from the dry land. For this to be done in one day would require of God a direct, creative manipulation of already existing material. In short, a miracle would have to occur to dry up the land in a period of only twenty-four hours. However, Genesis 2:5 seems to describe the third day as well but there Moses seems to be stressing the point that God is content to employ normal, providential means by which to direct his creation enterprise. Plants had yet to grow. And why? Because of two things: first, not enough moisture; and second, man had yet to appear to cultivate the ground. It appears to be describing a condition and a natural process that exists and continues to develop over a period much, much longer than one mere day.

Do you see the conflict? This argument seems so compelling to those who propose and advocate it that they are constrained to insist that because of the way Moses has deliberately described the conditions of the earth and of God’s dealing with it in Genesis 2:5 that it must be the key to how we are to interpret day three and, consequently, the entirety of Genesis 1. Genesis 2 indicates God acted through the normal laws of the nature he had previously ordained rather than by miraculous fiat and, therefore, to interpret Genesis 1 correctly, they say, it must be done literarily and not literally.

Now in responding to this argument, two things need to be said. For the first, let me quote from Frank Walker.

“How many theologians have studied the first two chapters of Genesis over the centuries and have never seen these inconsistencies to be of such a magnitude that warrant a completely new theory of creation? For example, Calvin’s comment on Genesis 2:5 shows an awareness of the problem mentioned earlier, but he offers an obvious solution: ‘But although he has before related that the herbs were created on the third day, yet it is not without reason that here again mention is made of them, in order that we may know that they were then produced, preserved and propagated, in a manner different from that which we perceive at the present day.’ Here Calvin assumes that Genesis 2:5 is not a description of Day Three, for, though plants were certainly ‘produced’ and ‘preserved’ during the twenty-four hour period of Day Three, which he firmly believed, it would be quite a stretch to say that they ‘propagated’ in that time.”

The second point regarding the Framework Hypothesis is that all of its main arguments have been answered already. Dr. E.J. Young, the late professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia and who preceded Dr. Kline to that post, saw the formulation of the Framework Hypothesis coming and dealt with it in a thorough manner in his book, In the Beginning, which was first published in 1976. His conclusion agrees with that of Calvin’s: when you reject the proposed connection between Genesis 2:5 and Day 3 of Genesis 1, the framework theory collapses.

Let me give you only three responses to this core principle of the Framework Hypothesis. First, Genesis 2 is not a ‘second’ version of the creation account. Within the entirety of the book of Genesis there are several places where Moses has obviously included his own chapter divisions. We can see the first of those chapter divisions in chapter 2:4. This division is not marked by the chapter and verse numbers – those were assigned to the text centuries later. But by the repeating of a phrase Moses employs to introduce the next section of the account he shows us his own chapter divisions. That repeating phrase: “*This is the account of …* “ always brings a break with the developing thought of the previous verses and introduces not only a new section but a new theme. Furthermore, when Moses uses this phrase he normally begins by recapitulating or encapsulating where things have developed up to that point. He regroups, as it were, and builds a context for the next development. (Another example of this for you to look at is found in Genesis 6:9-13.) When Moses’ next chapter then starts with Genesis 2:5, the focus is not on the production of plants but the setting of the stage for the creation of man and the placing him in the garden. That means that chapter two begins not with Day three but with Day six.

Second, we gain some insight into this change of focus when we look at the plants Moses describes in Genesis 2:5. They are different than what God will plant in the garden. As Dr. Joey Pipa observes:

“Moses does not describe all the plants of the earth, but two categories: ‘shrub of the field’ and ‘plant of the field’. Although commentators are divided as to what these plants were, most agree that these two terms do not include all the vegetation God made and that the reference points to the garden which God will plant (verses 8 and 9). … The purpose of Moses' summary (verses 5-7) is to demonstrate that the Garden was well suited for God's covenantal dealings with man; a delightful place that met all of man's needs. [E.J.] Young says: “To emphasize the beauty of the garden, but above all the goodness of God, a contrast is introduced. Man is to dwell as God's guest not in a waterless waste, but in a planted garden. The waterless ground of Genesis 2:5 stands in contrast to the well-watered Paradise which is to be man's earthly home.”

And then, third, there is good reason to conclude that Moses chose words to describe those plants very carefully and specifically. The plants mentioned in 2:5 are the same ones mentioned in 3:18 which is in the midst of God’s cursing of the ground because of the sin of Adam. *“thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field*. What seems to explain the setting of Genesis 2:5 the best is to be reminded that Moses is writing of a time when man walked in this newly created world – a world which had not yet been cursed and was, therefore, substantially different than the world we live in today. In that day there was yet no rain, as Moses relates, for rain would not begin until the time of the flood. Instead, as he says in vs. 6: *and a mistwas going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—* Furthermore, man had no need to cultivate the soil until after the fall. But with the fall, all of that changed. Not only would there be need of water, but man would have to till the soil and, a result of the curse, not only would plants of the field sprout – plants of which were not described as part of the garden before the fall (rf. 1:29-30) – but also thorns and thistles. As Frank Walker states, “No more would Adam and Eve simply reach out their hands to eat the abundant fruit of the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:5-7, then, helps the reader understand the drastic change that took place as a result of Adam’s sin.”

**3**

**The Fourth Day**

**Day Four - Gen. 1:14-19**

With the coming of the fourth day we notice something else. There is the revisiting, if you will, of the realms that have already been created and then something is added to them. And this seems to be a pattern that continues through days five and six as well. The Framework Hypothesis insists that these are not historical patterns but poetical ones. Such patterns purposefully make a contrast between days one through three with days four through six and that with each parallel the creature is made to rule the kingdom for which it was intended – the lights for the heavens, the creatures for the sea and birds for the sky, and the livestock and wild animals for the ground. Finally, over all of creation, man is made as ruler. Such obvious patterns as these, we are told, demonstrate, if they do not outright prove, that the purpose of the writer is to record history literarily and not chronologically.

This observation of parallel patterns can be made to sound quite fundamental and foundational to the Framework argument. But the foundation is really quite sandy. In the first place, the writing of Genesis 1 is done in typical prose style for the Hebrew language. It is grammatically predictable in the same way that other historical narratives are written and that are meant to be read chronologically and sequentially. Dr. Young tells us that Genesis 1 bears absolutely no mark or indication of a poetical style or intent. The fact that there is a progressive sequence of numbers in the days and the ‘chorus line’ that appears with the passing of one day to the next (*there was evening and morning, the* next *day*) do not suggest that we are looking at anything more than how God chose to work. And that, in no way, cancels out what we should understand when God chose to work. Take Joshua 6, for another example. There the story of the fall of the city of Jericho is told in the same narrative style. The Israelites marched around the city once every day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Yet, does anyone think that because there is a logical sequence and progression to the story that an interpretation that takes this story literally is nonsense?

In the second place, those who press onto the story of Genesis 1 a structural and poetic framework make a major point out of the contrast they find between days 1-3 and days 4-6. But if you look more closely at that contrast, you will discover that it is not as neat and tidy as they would like us to believe. Dr. Wayne Grudem gives a summary of some of these difficulties:

First, the proposed correspondence between the days of creation is not nearly as exact as its advocates have supposed. The sun, moon, and stars created on the fourth day as 'lights in the firmament of the heavens' (Gen.1:14) are placed not in any space created on Day 1 but in the 'firmament'... that was created on the second day. … [I]f we say that the second three days show the creation of things to fill the forms or spaces created on the first three days (or to rule the kingdoms as Kline says), then Day 4 overlaps at least as much with Day 2 as it does with Day 1.

Moreover, the parallel between Days 2 and 5 is not exact, because in some ways the preparation of a space for the fish and birds of Day 5 does not come in Day 2 but in Day 3. It is not until Day 3 that God gathers the waters together and calls them 'seas' (Gen..1:10), and on Day 5 the fish are commanded to 'fill the waters in the seas' (Gen.1:22). … Establishing a parallel between Day 2 and Day 5 faces further difficulties in that nothing is created on Day 5 to inhabit the 'waters above the firmament,' and the flying things created on this day not only fly in the sky created on Day 2, but also live and multiply on the 'earth' or 'dry land' created on Day 3.

Finally, the parallel between Days 3 and 6 is not precise, for nothing is created on Day 6 to fill the seas that were gathered together on Day 3. With all of these points of imprecise correspondence and overlapping between places and things created to fill them, the supposed literary 'framework,' while having an initial appearance of neatness, turns out to be less and less convincing upon closer reading of the text.

Now, it is not as though we cannot see or admit to any patterns between these two groups of days. We see no reason to deny that such a pattern is there but we differ on how much to make of it. After all, we see the same pattern develop in many such ways all through Scripture. You have to build a house before you can live in it, you have to prepare your food before you can eat. There is a logical and progressive link here to be sure, but appreciating it is a far cry from focusing in on it as if that were a key to understanding the prose of Genesis 1 or from declaring that because of such patterns “obviously” the writer is not writing anything that is to be understood literally.

Instead of those patterns leading us away from understanding the historicity of the creation, they help us to understand it. On the fourth day, God said *“Let there be lights* [plural] *in the expanse of the heavens.”* Finally, we are told, time is born, the sun has been created, now we have our 24-hour days! But that is not what the passage indicates. Separation of light and darkness, simply for the sake of separation is already accomplished in vs. 4. It is the purpose of those lights that is given here: “*for signs and for seasons, and for days and years*,”. A ‘sign’ in Scripture is a mark or a witness of an already existing condition. In Genesis 4:15, God appointed a sign for Cain lest anyone take vengeance on him for already being a murderer and already being dealt with by God. The circumcision Moses was commanded to undergo in Genesis 17:11 was a sign of the covenant that God had already established with him. The Sabbath was taught to the Israelites, such as in Exodus 31:13, to be a sign between God and his church for generations so that they might know the Lord who sanctified them. Signs do not make something real, they point to reality and verify it.

And the giving of a sign is not limited to the naturally providential either. In fact, many of the occurrences of the word ‘sign’ indicate something miraculous on the part of God. The plagues inflicted upon Egypt were to be considered as signs of God’s sovereign power and will over Pharaoh. In forecasting the coming Messiah, the prophet Isaiah declared: *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Is. 7:14, ESV).* And Hezekiah’s prayer is answered with a sign of God’s promise that the shadow of the sun will go back upon ten of the steps of his stairway (rf. 2 Kings 20). The receding shadow did not make God’s promise real, God’s promise made the sign worth witnessing.

We find the same thing with the word “rule” in vs. 16. Now the meaning of that word can vary with the context but we have found no place where the use of the word suggests that the ruler (in this case, the sun) first creates or causes to exist the domain over which he then rules. In other words, the sun did not create the day so it could have something to be a sign of and rule over. Also, look at the repetition of both language and purpose in vs.s 15-18: *“to give light upon the earth*,” *“to rule over the day and over the night,”* *“to separate the light from the darkness.”* But there is nothing here about creating the cycle of evening and morning or defining what a day and a night are. Furthermore, rather than announcing some dramatic change that these greater and lesser lights would bring to the physical universe, the fourth day ends with the identical language of days 1, 2 and 3: *“there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.”*

**4**

**The Fifth Day**

**Day 5 – Genesis 1:20-23**

Now we must be brief for this examination of the rest of the chapter and the remaining days. We would just point out one thing regarding day five. In verse 20 the will of God is verbalized this way: *“Let the waters swarm …”* and so on. Dr. James Boice, in his commentary on Genesis, explains to us that “[t]he Hebrew word … does not specify a method by which God caused most things to come into being.” “Let”, in other words, would be an appropriate word to use if Moses was simply saying that God providentially allowed or willed these animals to exist, develop, even evolve. And because the word which we translate “let” appears throughout the chapter, it might have some bearing on how quickly creation came into being. But this is immediately followed with verse 21 in which God is said to have “created” these animals. There, the word in the Hebrew is known to be much more direct, even to create instantly, or out of nothing. Dr. Boice then points out that while the word ‘let’ appears earlier in the text and in earlier days, the word ‘create’ is not paired with it, therefore leaving the door open for the possibility that the earth might have developed slowly after which God then directly called the animals into existence.

There are two things to say in response to this. First, the word ‘create’ does appear much earlier in the text, in fact, it appears in verse 1. Verse 1 is the title for the entire book in Hebrew and it is the headline for the whole of the creation exercise in the opening chapter. To use the word ‘create’ there, which is to call into being instantly and out of nothing, surely includes all that follows. Second, just as with the actual creation and placing of the sun in the heavens, there is no suggestion that the days are any different. Instead, what was defined for us as ‘day’ back in vs. 5, continues to describe the time frame throughout the entire creating process – *there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day*.

**5**

**The Sixth Day**

**Day 6 – Genesis 1:24-2:1**

With the commencement of day six, these same words used to express the creative will of God are repeated; and, as they are, they underscore the point made concerning day five. The word ‘let’ is used in verse 24. Any question we might have regarding how long God allowed for the earth to *bring forth living creatures* must be defined by the end of the verse where Moses simply states, *“And it was so”* and the beginning of verse 25 where it says God then ‘made’ those beasts. In verse 26 the word ‘let’ is used again - two times, in fact - and this time in reference to the creating of man. Yet no Reformed theologian within the context of our study would be willing to consider the possibility here that the word ‘let’ means to develop slowly or providentially over a vast period of time. ‘Let’ is not only used in regards to the man’s creation but also his rule. And no Reformed theologian within the context of our study would be willing to consider anything other than the straightforward teaching of Scripture throughout that man was created ruler and did not experience a slow rise to power over the elements.

Then, in verse 27, in a triune chorus, God ‘creates’ man – using the Hebrew word *bara* again to indicate God’s intimate and personal activity. It would seem almost obvious to us that while much has been made of the distinctions between these words ‘let,’ ‘made’ and ‘create’ rather than referring to any indication of technical specialties in their respective nuances, could it be, perhaps, that Moses is simply using them interchangeably? What clearly defines man as unique over all of creation is not the fact that God ‘created’ him but also that God chose to *“make man in our image”* and that God would “let them have dominion … over all the earth” (Gen. 1:26, ESV).

Then, with verse 31, we finally come to the end of God’s creating process. He began ‘creating’ in verse 1 and now he looks over all he ‘made.’ And ‘*behold*,’ Moses said, *‘it was very good.’* Here is the polemic Moses is stressing. It all comes back to that word ‘good.’ What does God make but that which is good? Creation did not take place over lengthy periods of time – not even enough time as to allow for one death among all the living things that God had made. Romans 5:12 says *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—* Creation would not become good, it began good. That is what Moses is holding out for us to see – how far creation has fallen under the weight of God’s curse on man’s sin and how wicked the heart of man has become and how desperately much we need a Savior who was promised of God literally and immediately after the fall, to come and restore all things to the glory of God the Father.

**6**

**The Seventh Day**

**Day 7 – Genesis 2:2-3**

Finally we have come to the Sabbath Day. How we wish this entire paper, this entire seminar had been solely on our focus and study of this one day out of the whole creation week. It is absolutely precious and truly is the pinnacle of all that has gone before. It is truly “[t]he day of all the week the best, an emblem of our eternal rest.” In dealing with all the contradictions to the obvious in regards to the previous six days of creation we cannot help but feel that they have succeeded in robbing us even today of our need to prepare, touch and rejoice in this one, last day. But there lies one more observation that we must make before we can conclude our study to this point.

One last argument against taking Genesis 1 literally is to refer to ch. 2:3 and point out that there is apparently no ending chorus, no *evening and morning the seventh day*. Combined with his own interpretation of Hebrews 4:3-4, Dr. Kline insists that the seventh day is an expression of God's eternal rest:

The word 'day' must be figurative because it is used for the eternity during which God rests from his creative labors. ... Purely exegetical considerations, therefore, complete the conclusion that the divine author has employed the imagery of an ordinary week to provide a figurative chronological framework for the account of his creative acts. (Kline, p. 157)

Dr. Young, again, counters helpfully:

It should be noted that the seventh day is to be interpreted as similar in nature to the preceding six days. There is no Scriptural warrant ever (certainly not Hebrews 4:3-5) for the idea that this seventh day is eternal.(Young, p. 77-78)

and Dr. Pipa adds:

In Gen.2:1-3, the eternal rest is the reality and the Sabbath day is a type and offer of that rest. We must not confuse the reality with the type otherwise the type loses its significance. In order for the day to serve as a type, Moses leaves the record of the end of the day open-ended. (Pipa, p. 12)

Furthermore, the commentary of God in his giving of the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 makes it very clear to God, at least, that that first Sabbath Day passed normally into the beginning of the next week and has continued ever since.

**Conclusion**

We will defer the words of my conclusion to men who are much more capable than we are and upon whose wisdom we have leaned upon so heavily. And in doing so we discover we are in an excellent tradition. Dr. Pipa quotes Dr. Young who in turn summarizes Dr. Aalders when he says:

[There are] two considerations which must guide every serious interpreter of the first chapter of Genesis. (1) In the text of Genesis itself, … there is not a single allusion to suggest that the days are to be regarded as a form or mere manner of representation and hence of no significance for the essential knowledge of the divine creative activity. (2) In Exodus 20:11 the activity of God is presented to man as a pattern, and this fact presupposes that there was a reality in the activity of God which man is to follow. How could man be held accountable for working six days if God himself had not actually worked for six days? To the best of the present writer's knowledge none has ever answered these two considerations. (Pipa, p. 17)

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