

Dr. Jack L. Arnold
Genesis

Lesson 5
Day-Age Theory
Genesis 1:1-31

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Day-Age theory is another attempt to harmonize the apparent facts of science (geology, fossils, etc.), with the creation account. NOTE: Of all the time theories, the Day-Age theory is by far the best and most logical.

B. This theory was popularized by James D. Dane, former professor at Yale University. It is held today by such men as Eric Seuer, Gleason Archer, J. Oliver Buswell and a host of other evangelical scholars.

II. AGE-DAY (Concordistic Theory)

A. Definition. This view is usually associated with the geologic time scale and allows each day of Genesis 1 to be periods of as much as one million years in length. There were no 24-hour days in the history of creation at anytime.

B. Support

1. Uses of "Day" in Scripture

a. Twelve-hour period. It is sometimes used to mean the period from daylight to dark. In its simplest sense it is the light time of the day cycle (Gen. 8:22; Psa. 55:17).

b. Twenty-four hours. This is the normal sunset to sunset usage (Exod. 12:15-20; Lev. 23:32).

c. Day of Jehovah. This is a use as a long period of time, which is yet future.

d. General time. General time is expressed in Job 20:38, "day of his wrath"; "day of trouble" Psa. 20:11); end "day of cleansing" Lev. 14:2), which is an undetermined time of healing.

e. Day according to God: Time is not reckoned in the mind of man as it is with God (Psa. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8).

f. POINT: The word "day" has all kinds of meanings in the Bible, so why does it have to be a literal 24-hour day in Genesis 1?

2. Context in Genesis 1:1-2:4. In Genesis 2:4, "day" is used to cover the length of the begetting of the heaven and the earth, evidently including all activity from Genesis 1:1-2:3.

3. Creation of Man

"Genesis 1:27 states that after creating all the land animals on the sixth day, God created man, both male and female. Then, in the more detailed treatment of Genesis 2 we are told that God created Adam first, gave him the responsibility of tending the Garden of Eden for some length of time until He observed him to be lonely. He then granted him fellowship of all the beasts and animals of earth, with opportunity to bestow names upon them all. Some undetermined period of time after God observed that Adam was still lonely. He finally fashioned a human wife for him by means of a rib removed from him during a "deep sleep." Then at last he brought Eve before Adam and presented her to him as his new life partner. Who can imagine that all these transactions could possibly have taken place in 120 minutes of the sixth day (or even within twenty-four hours, for that matter)? And yet Genesis 1:27 states both Adam and Eve were created at the very end of the final day of creation. Obviously the "days" of chapter 1 are intended to present stages of unspecified length, not literal twenty-four hour days" (G. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*).

4. View. A consideration of giving the word "day" a longer time element than 24 hours was held by many Jewish rabbis, and some early Christian greats, Irenaeus Origen, Augustine, etc.

5. Not a Stepping Stone to Evolution. A man does not have to be an evolutionist to believe in the Day-Age theory. In fact, evangelicals who do hold this position do not hold to the evolutionary theory.

6. Geologic Harmonization. The Day-Age view provides a framework which best fits with geological strata and fossil beds. The order of the strata is basically the same and vast ages would be necessary for the formation of these fossil strata. Archer says,

The age-day theory, then, accounts for the six creative days as indicating the broad outlines of the creative work of God in fashioning the earth and its inhabitants up until the appearance of Adam and Eve. Modern geologists agree with Genesis 1 in the following particulars: (a) the earth began in a confused and chaotic form, which subsequently gave way to a more orderly state; (b) the proper conditions for the maintenance of life were brought into being: the separation of the thick vapor surrounding the earth into clouds above and rivers and seas below with the evaporation-precipitation cycle, and also with the increasing penetration of the sunlight (for the previous creation of the sun is suggested by the first command: "Let there be light!") to the surface of the earth; (c) the separation of land from sea (or the emergence of dry land above the receding water level) preceded the appearance of life upon the soil; (d) vegetable life had already made its appearance before the first emergence of animal life in the Cambrian period. As a matter of fact, all the invertebrate phyla appear contemporaneously with remarkable suddenness in the Cambrian strata, with no indication in any of the Precambrian deposits as to how these various phyla, classes and orders represented by no less than 5,000 species) may have developed; (e) both Genesis and geology agree that the simpler forms appeared first and the more complex later; (f) both agree that mankind appeared as the latest and highest product of the creative process.

7. Glorifies God More. God is glorified just as much by using an age as a day for His creative process. It must be remembered that God's time scale is not limited as man's is. To Him, a thousand years is as one day. God is not in a hurry and can afford to take His time.

C. Objections

1. The immediate context of Genesis plus the fact that when "day" is used as a numerical adjective it always refers to a literal, 24-hour day seems to weaken the Day-Age view.
2. It is difficult to understand why God would need thousands of years to create man, unless He did it through the evolutionary process. If this is the case, then the Bible refutes any idea of the theistic evolution of man (Matt. 19:14; I. Cor. 11:8; Gen. 2:7; I Cor. 15:39).
3. This view plays down the majesty and supernatural character of God. Whenever a miracle was done in the Bible it was instantaneous and complete. An immediate act of creation brings much more glory to God.
4. The language of Genesis 1 seems to support instant creation rather than long periods of time: "God created" (1:1), "God said, let there be" (1:6), "God made" (1:7), "Let the earth bring forth" (1:11), etc.
5. This view capitulates a great deal to uniformitarian geology and often allows science to govern the interpretation of Scripture.
6. This view may leave the door open to some type of evolution.

III. REAL DAYS BUT NOT ORDINARY DAYS THEORY

A. Definition. This is a modified Day-Age view which admits that a normal 24-hour day is scientific fact in operation today, but in the original creation "day" might well have been a figure of ten minutes, ten years or ten thousand years (eons are highly improbable). Each day was varied in length to accomplish its intended purpose.

B. Support

1. Meaning of Day. It can be proven that "day" can have various time elements attached to it in Scripture.
2. Fits With Science. This view can harmonize geology, which takes vast lengths of time, with Scripture, and yet hold to immediate creation of man, which might have only taken minutes.

3. Things May Not Have Always Been Uniform. Those who hold to a literal 24-hour day are usually also very strong in their conviction that all things since original creation have not been uniform, Why then would days have to be uniform in length?

C. Objections

1. Context and use of “day” with a numerical adjective in Genesis 1 supports a literal 24-hour day.
2. There is no indication anywhere to Scripture that there was a variance of time in the days of creation.
3. This view must make concessions to science.