

Literally, How It All Began

Well, take your Bibles this morning and turn to Genesis chapter 1. We are going to be in Genesis. Someone was mentioning to me this morning that their Bible doesn't stay open very well at Genesis 1 because it's right at the front, and I just apologized because we're going to be there for a while, so maybe it'll start to get broken in enough that it stays open. But we are going to be in Genesis 1 this morning.

I titled this morning's message, Literally How It All Began. Okay, Literally How It All Began. It's a little bit of a play on words that you'll see as we begin to work through our text this morning.

But we're going to look at verse 2 in particular, and then we're going to look at now kind of an overview of the chapter as a whole. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And so, as we've seen over the past couple of weeks, here it is. This is God's introduction of Himself to the world, that He introduces Himself first and foremost as the preexistent, the eternal Creator, the only One who existed, who then brought out of nothing everything in the heavens and in the earth.

Verse 2 now begins to give shape and substance to that opening statement. And so, we read that the earth in its creation began without form, and it began void, and it began with darkness over the face of the deep, and in that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. It was formless and void.

And so, what Moses is conveying to us here under the inspiration of the Spirit is that when God brought about the earth, it was not immediately or fully in the final state that it would be at the end of the creation week. The idea here of form and void is indicating that the earth at this point was uninhabitable for humans. In that initial phase, it wasn't able to sustain human life.

And in fact, that's really the purpose of the earth. God created the earth so that His crown jewel, mankind, could be placed on the earth, and He could be sustained, He could work, He could live on this globe. And in fact, the earth is often called amongst planets, as you know, has a special designation of being the Goldilocks planet.

By that, what we mean to say is, just like that last bed that Goldilocks got in, well, it's been a while since I've read that. I had to stop, and I'm like, it was the last bed she went in. That was the right one.

This planet is perfectly suited to sustain human life. In fact, this planet has the chemical

elements that are needed for life to exist, things like water and carbon. It is just right for sustaining life in the fact that it has a climate that enables the ability to grow food, and there's sunshine so that plants can produce photosynthesis, and there's an atmosphere that keeps the earth warm and traps heat.

And there's mineral resources and energy resources, and the earth is fashioned for life. And yet, when God first created, He did not create the earth in that state immediately. Rather, He brought the earth into existence, and then He would fashion and form and prepare it and outfit it for humanity.

It started out without form and void. The best way to translate that is, it was a wasteland. Okay? And we use that expression.

We know what a wasteland is. There's a desert in Antarctica. Usually when you think of deserts, what do we think of, kids? We think of a hot, dry place.

Well, the second part of that is what defines a desert. A desert is a dry place. You could have a desert in Antarctica, and so the Antarctic polar desert is a wasteland.

The high temp, 30 degrees Fahrenheit. The lows, sometimes down to negative 90, and there's less than two inches of precipitation a year. Okay? I've met a lot of people that move south for retirement, yet to hear anyone say, I'm moving to Antarctica for retirement.

It's uninhabitable. No one lives there. Okay? It's a desert wasteland.

And so when Moses, as the earth was without form and void, he's saying the earth didn't have all the proper boundaries yet. It wasn't hemmed in for creation, for mankind to live in, and it's essentially a wasteland. We don't get a lot of detail here, but Moses does say that there's this dark, deep water.

Look at the first part of verse 2. There was darkness over the face of the deep, and then in the second line, the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water. So we don't know a whole lot here, but we know there's a lot of deep, dark water over the earth. Obviously, light has not been created yet.

If you've ever jumped into the ocean, as you start to go down, it gets very dark, so you picture deep waters over the earth. We don't know a whole lot beyond that, but we do know water was significant because what we read here and then also the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3 verse 5, speaking about those who would deny creation, said they deny this fact. They deliberately overlook this fact that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the Word of God.

So at this point, the functions have not been assigned yet to the earth. There's no hydrological cycle yet. The dry lands have not been separated.

The seas don't have boundaries. And so really, in the way that God created here, it's astounding because you understand that there's still the imprinture of this progression all over creation. Now, God could have created the earth with mankind in it and all of the animals and all of the plants instantaneously, and yet He chose to do it progressively.

And you think this is the world that we live in, right? As soon as an egg is fertilized and that little embryo begins to grow, what happens? Well, it has to grow into a fully formed human being. The picture here is of progress. And so, God, who's certainly capable, I mean, He created everything out of nothing, certainly could have created everything all in one shot, began here with the earth without form and void.

It's dark and it's wet. And we see that in this first creative act, the Spirit is present. The second part of verse 2 reads, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

So, you have the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters. This word for hovering is used in Deuteronomy 32.11, and the picture there is actually of a bird, an eagle that flutters over its young, okay, an eagle that would flutter over its young. So, the imagery here is of the Spirit, like an eagle, hovering over the waters.

It's just kind of interesting to think, in Matthew chapter 3, the Spirit's going to descend like a dove. So, we recognize that the Spirit is related or connected to, in terms of imagery, to flying here like a bird. And so, the Spirit here is ready to continue this process of creation day by day by day.

It's going to be carried out here through the Spirit. And so, we see already here in Genesis chapter 1 verse 2, the first intimations of the Trinity, okay? This doctrine is not expanded here. It's not detailed, but it is intimated.

You say, well, I see in the beginning God in verse 1. I see the Spirit in verse 2. Where is the Son? Well, picture this. He's there with the Father, but He's kind of behind the Father. He's not mentioned explicitly.

John 1, 1 through 3, says, in the beginning was the Word. That's speaking of the eternal Word, the very Son Himself. That Word was, interesting, with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God, Father and Son together in Genesis 1, 1. Colossians 1, Paul would say that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Not the first created being, rather, all things came into being through Him. In fact, Paul would make that very clear in the next verse.

He would say, for by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. So, Jesus is called the firstborn of creation. He is the initiator here of creation.

Paul would go on to say, all things were created through Him and for Him, speaking of the Son, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. We read the creation account. Normally, the Father gets highlighted, appropriately so.

He's seen elsewhere in Scripture as the architect and the designer and the initiator, and so we think of the Father's role in the Trinity in that way. And yet here we see that it's not just the Father, rather, it's Father, Son, and Spirit involved in creating everything out of nothing. Recently, there was a megachurch pastor who had said casually, kind of flippantly, that one of the problems with reading the Old Testament, and in particular Genesis, is the fact that Jesus doesn't appear in the Bible, quote, until like 40 books later.

I want to tell you, first of all, Jesus appears throughout the Old Testament multiple times throughout Genesis. And starting off here, right off the bat in Genesis 1.1, when we read, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, you have the Father creating, you have the Son creating, and you have the Spirit creating. This is creation, the Father creating through the Son and through the Spirit as the Spirit hovers over the wasteland of the earth.

This is what sets now the stage for the days of creation. This is what sets the stage for everything that is about to come. In many ways, when we stand here on the precipice of verse 3, we're about to plunge into the details of the creation of the universe, okay, the creation that was designed by God to showcase His glory.

And the purpose of Genesis 1 is to induce worship in the hearts of mankind. We read Genesis 1, and we stand back in awe of the God who created, and we marvel at who He is, and we marvel at what He's made, and we marvel that He made us. And this may or may not come as a surprise to you, but when you get to Genesis 1, people actually believe differently about what it means.

Are you aware of that? Are you aware that there's different takes on what Genesis 1 means, and how we're to understand it, and what truth is valid to draw from it, and what is not? And so, my aim this morning is actually to get us oriented around what we're about to study with a proper approach, okay? And it's been a successful morning if this takes place. If you leave here with confidence in the Word of God, and confidence personally that you can know what to believe and why to believe it, I would say, job well done. That is the goal of this morning's message.

And so, when we come to Genesis 1, the first question that inevitably comes up is this, is this fact or is this fiction? Is this a sort of fairy tale that was told to ancient Semitic peoples who liked stories but were kind of unable to grasp concrete realities? And therefore, this is kind of just the Hebrew story of origins, like many people groups have a story of how we all got here. Is this fact or is this fiction? How does God want us to understand it? And I would say, in my opinion, I was going to say in my humble opinion, but then it automatically doesn't sound like it's a humble opinion anymore. So, in my

opinion, that question doesn't quite go far enough.

I think fact or fiction is a good place to begin, but we've got to go one step further and ask this, is this account factual or is this account figurative? Okay? Is this account factual or is this account figurative? Why is that? Well, there are many people who believe Genesis 1 is true, and Genesis 1 should be taken and understood as truth, but the intent behind it was not to convey concrete realities, rather it was figurative. It was poetic. It was to teach us big lessons about who God is and what He's done, but not really any concrete realities.

Said this way, is Moses intending to provide us with a concrete account of creation, or is this simply a mythological or a figurative story? And I'll say this this morning, my pastoral concern is not so much with skeptics who deny that Genesis 1 is fact versus fiction. So, those who would deny Scripture and the veracity of Scripture, I don't see them as a primary threat, at least, to the church. They are a threat, but I don't believe they're a primary threat because they're obviously against Christ and His Word.

They're anti-supernaturalists. They're materialists. Generally, they reject the notion of absolute truth whatsoever, except, ironically, in the case of making the assertion that absolute truth does not exist, right? They have a category for absolute truth only when they're denying that absolute truth exists.

My concern is not primarily with the skeptic. My concern is rather with people who are wearing the same jersey, okay? People who are wearing the same jersey of saying we believe the Bible, we have a high view of Scripture, we believe in inerrancy, we believe in sufficiency, we believe in authority, and when we come to Genesis 1, what we realize is there's not concrete history that we can draw from it. Rather, it's somehow mythological or it's poetic.

It doesn't really mean what it appears to mean. I believe this is a subtle but dangerous attack on authority, okay? The worst attacks are the ones that are subtle, not the ones that are obvious. And so, the skeptic is very obvious.

It's like maybe you've gotten one of those phishing emails. Actually, I remember in the early days getting these and kind of thinking, do I delete it? You know, what do I do with this? But it would come like this, Dear Sir, I am Prince so-and-so from Nigeria. Your help would be very much appreciated.

I want to transfer all of my fortune outside of Nigeria to a foreign account. If you could be kind and transfer a small sum of \$3,500 to my account, I would be able to unfreeze my account and transfer my money outside of Nigeria. To repay your kindness, I will send you \$1 million.

Please contact me to precede Prince so-and-so, right? I mean, probably got one of those

emails. You get the email and you're thinking, like, I'm 99.9% sure that's not accurate. But like, what if? That's a more obvious phishing scheme, okay? But if you get an email, as some of you did this year, from what looks like my email address, and it says, Hey, I have an urgent need right now.

I'm in a prayer meeting. I can't talk. Just email me back.

That's a little bit harder to spot. In fact, it was able to dupe some people. That's a less obvious attack.

And so my concern is that you have people who are wearing the jersey of inerrancy, wearing the jersey of the authority of Scripture, and yet they're undermining that in the way that they approach Genesis 1. I want you to know this morning what you believe and why you believe it. Here's how that attack typically manifests itself, okay? Someone comes in, some guy with a PhD, and he says, I know Hebrew better than you. And you know what else I know? I know a little bit about science, or I'm an expert in ancient people groups, or whatever the case might be.

And now this brilliant scholar asserts that the message of Genesis 1 isn't as clear as you think it is. And in fact, there's technical details that are probably going right over your head, things that you're missing. It's very, very technical.

And all of this is going to tell you why the text could mean something different than what it obviously and plainly means. I want to tell you this morning, Genesis 1 is not complicated. It's not overly technical.

The basic message is plain and obvious. And there's not multiple correct meanings. There's one proper, one valid interpretation of Genesis 1. And so as we walk through this, the question is going to be, what is the obvious, plain yield of this text? See, what I want to encourage you in this morning, what I want to challenge you in is, you don't need an advanced degree to decipher hidden meanings.

This was given to you. This was given to you for revelation. It was given to you for your edification.

It was designed by God to be profitable for the masses, for the common man. And so I want you to have confidence that you can pick up the Scriptures, and you can read them in a reliable English translation, and you can understand the very mind of God, that God intended not to conceal truth but to reveal it to His people, and that He revealed it in such a way not merely to satisfy scholars and scientists, although they're included, they can benefit too, but for ordinary people like us. That is the message of Genesis 1. And so what we're going to do this morning is we are going to look at the text, and we're just going to examine the evidence.

We're going to see what the text says about itself. Because here's the deal, I don't

actually want you to leave this morning, and you just go away believing what your pastor said is true, or what your church believes, or what you grew up being taught. I want you to know what you believe and know why you believe it.

And so I'm going to read the passage, and then we're going to make some observations. Genesis 1, 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness he called night.

And there was evening, and there was morning the first day. And God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse, and it was so.

And God called the expanse heaven, and there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear, and it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas, and God saw that it was good.

And God said, let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed and fruit, trees bearing fruit, and which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth, and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit, and which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good, and there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth, and it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night and the stars, and God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness, and God saw that it was good, and there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens, so God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind, and God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the seas,

and let birds multiply on the earth, and there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds, livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind, and God saw that it was good.

Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them, and God blessed them.

And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. And God said, behold, I've given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed and its fruit, you shall have them for food. And every beast of the earth and every bird of the heavens and everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.

And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day.

Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. I want you to stop and take in that account for a moment.

And I want to set before you that there are only two ways of reading that account. There's many, many different views, but there's two ways ultimately of reading that account. One would be to read it as history, that is to say that this is the natural, plain sense or literal reading of Genesis 1, that it's historical narrative given to us to provide the concrete accounting of how it is that creation came into being.

Option two, bucket everything that is not history, everything that is not historical narrative. There's a lot of fancy words for this. Well, it's poetry, or it's elevated poetry, or it's prose, which is still poetry, but it sounds even better, or it's elevated prose, or it's semi-poetic, or it's elevated narrative, or it's poetic narrative.

Here's a new one, mythohistory, which is not really mythology and not really history, but it's kind of a hybrid. The point in all of those would be to say you can't take what you're reading at face value. And so the question becomes this, how do we know? I mean, how do you know? Do you just pick your favorite? Who can yell the loudest? Do we just toss

our hands up and say, well, you can't really decide anyway? I mean, who knows? It's kind of you have your reading and I have my reading.

I'd say this, you can't just assert that something is poetry or mythohistory or elevated prose. You must demonstrate it from the text. And so as we examine this text, what I want you to do this morning is just see what it yields.

And here's my argument. I think that we could read that account. I know 10-year-olds pretty well.

Got a 10-year-old right now. I think we could bring up some 10-year-olds and we could read them poetry and mythology and history, and I think they would be able to guess on all those, and they'd be able to get the genre correct. And when we read Genesis 1, they're going to say, that's definitely not poetry.

That's definitely not a myth. That is history. Okay? That's my assertion, but I'm going to demonstrate it for you this morning.

Is Genesis 1 history or not? Is it factual or is it figurative? I've asserted that it's written to be factual, but I want you to actually see this now from the text. Number one, we look at the syntax. Okay? We look at how things are structured in terms of the words.

How do they relate to one another? When you read Genesis 1 in English, the progression of the story is reflecting what's known in Hebrew as the WoW consecutive. Okay? What is the WoW consecutive? The WoW consecutive is a verbal construction that appears in historical narrative, and it rarely appears in poetry, like hardly ever. How many WoW consecutives are in Genesis 1? There's 51.

Okay? That's a lot. That is a lot. What does it sound like? Well, it's things like this.

Verse 3, and God said. Verse 4, and God saw. Verse 4, and God separated.

Verse 6, and God said. Verse 7, and God made. Okay? These are concrete realities.

They're in a verbal construction that is take it to the bank historical narrative. So, if we were to look at the language here as the syntax works together, this is the syntax of history. That's not my opinion.

That's just how language works. Okay? That is objective. It recounts then events sequentially.

That is the purpose of the WoW consecutive. And this happened, and then this happened, and then this happened, and then this happened. Now, that is categorically different than the purpose of poetry.

What is the purpose of poetry? There's not a purpose of poetry. I'm just kidding. Poetry

has its place.

Okay? Poetry's purpose is not to give you a historical sequence of events, and yet this text clearly gives a historical sequence of events, and it uses a construction that appears predominantly in historical narrative. This is the first piece of evidence. Next, what is the structure of the text? Okay? We looked at the syntax.

What is the structure? A key distinctive of poetry, Hebrew poetry, is parallelism. Hard word to say. Parallelism.

Okay? Two lines that relate to each other. The second line says the same thing as the first line. It just uses it in different language.

Examples of this that are well known, even apropos to this study, would be Psalm 19. It opens up and says, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. We're saying the same thing there.

Those aren't two different realities. They're the same. There's just parallelism.

It's a key feature of Hebrew poetry. If someone is going to write poetry in Hebrew, they're going to include parallelism. O Lord, in Your strength the king rejoices, and in Your salvation I greatly exult.

Psalm 21.1. That's that parallelism. So, we come here and we look at Genesis 1. You just heard it read. Is there any parallelism in Genesis 1? There's not.

I mean, perhaps in verse 27 itself, but it's certainly not categorically indicating poetry. It does not exist in the text. Furthermore, poetry generally in Hebrew has a poetic arrangement.

Think of Psalm 136, the refrain repeated, for His steadfast love endures forever. For His steadfast love endures forever. Twenty-six times that appears.

And so, people come to this and they say, you know what? It says morning and evening, morning and evening, morning and evening, morning and evening. That is poetry. But is it? Is just repeating words poetry? In fact, in Genesis, you're going to find these are the generations of, and it's going to be repeated throughout the book of Genesis.

There's repetition. And even the scholars that deny the historicity of Genesis 1 through 11 don't say that chapters 12 through 50 are poetry. They say that those are history.

And so, there's not a structure in Genesis 1 that would indicate poetry, and this is just subjective. It's a definition of what poetry is. Next, let's look at the grammar of Genesis 1. What kinds of words are being used? Okay, that would be the grammar.

Does this chapter contain language consistent with mythology or poetry? We'd be

looking for things like metaphors. That would be consistent with poetry. There's always imagery used.

Just hear some of the familiar imagery and poetic language of the Bible that you're very familiar with. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O Lord. Or Psalm 55, O that I had wings like a dove I would fly away and be at rest.

Psalm 55 or 56a, you've put my tears in a bottle. I mean, there's metaphorical imagery all throughout Scripture, in particular in the Psalms, and we love it. I mean, it is glorious, right? To say, Jesus knows my pain, okay, that's helpful, it's true.

But to say God puts my tears in a bottle, wow, that is impactful. It opens up a loop in our minds rather than just asserting a proposition to speak in that kind of poetic language. And so, we come to Genesis 1, and we begin to examine the text and we say, all right, is there poetic language throughout Genesis 1? Is there metaphor and imagery and the same type of examples that I just read that we're so familiar with? We find absolutely not.

Genesis 1 is using concrete terms accurately. And there's enumeration of days, and there was references to time, and there's order, and there's sequence. We know that in verse 14, when we read that there are lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, that it's describing a concrete reality, the sun and the moon.

And so, when we look at Genesis 1 and we look at the grammar, we say the grammar is not consistent with mythological language or poetic language. Next, we look at the literature itself. What is the sense as you read this? What kind of literature it is? I mean, you do this all the time.

It would actually be fun to do sometimes. I use this example. We should do it sometime.

When you hear a newspaper article, if it was being read to you, you would say, that's news. And then if we read a personal note, you would say, that's a personal note. And then if I read a poem, you would say, that's a poem.

And then if I read a technical paper, you'd say, that's a technical paper. And I wouldn't even have to tell you what kind of genre I'm reading. I would just read it, and you would just know what it is that I'm reading.

And so, when you read this genre, when you heard Genesis 1 read, you see there's an emphasis here on timing and sequence and definitive creative acts put in definitive terms. And those acts are separated, and they're distinguished, and they're named, and they attach themselves to concrete realities. I mean, just even to think of the mere numeration of days, day 1, day 2, day 3, day 4, day 5, day 6. I mean, some of the arguments for taking Genesis as mythology, well, you don't understand the Semitic mind.

I mean, these guys were ancient. They're kind of like Neanderthals. Look, counting is not like really advanced, okay? If I said, here's what we're going to do.

You're number 1, you're number 2, you're number 3, 4, 5, 6. Okay, go get in a line. We could do that with kindergartners. They might rebel against it, okay? They might not submit, but they're at least going to comprehend the instruction.

And so, why would God be giving you day, day, day, day, day in order and explaining it in that way if it didn't actually be designed to be taken in that way? I mean, you tell me. If I came back from a vacation, I said, we traversed from one end of the earth to the other, and we saw towering cities and majestic mountainous skylines and prairies that extended to infinity and forest glades that did not have beginning or end, okay? Like, you're not taking that as concrete reality. It's true that that could be a true representation of my vacation, but it's obviously not intended to convey concrete realities.

Now, on the other hand, if I came back from my vacation and I said, day 1, we departed in the morning for Brazil, our first destination. We spent the day there through the evening, and then the next morning, on day 2, we departed and went to the Amazon rainforest. How does that hit you? We could say they're both true, but they're conveying different realities and they are intended to.

One commentator writes, the march of days is too majestic to carry no implication of ordered sequence. It seems overly subtle to adopt a view of the passage which discounts one of the primary impressions it makes upon the reader. I just say, let's not imagine that the Scripture comes to us in coded messages that need to be unencrypted, but rather God just speaks plainly to His people so they can understand.

And the obvious meaning of Genesis 1 is to record the historical account of how God brought creation into being. This is what is so tremendous about this study and looking at the text itself and letting it speak. And while we're at it, we might as well just address upfront the matter of days.

There are many views that attempt to change the orientation of the days, either in sequence or whether or not they were a literal 24-hour period. We've already established that Genesis 1 is not relying on metaphorical language, so our default position would be to assume when Moses says day, he means day. But rather than just assert that, I want to demonstrate it for you, okay? Hebrew word for day is yom.

It means day, and it's just like the English word, okay? There's nothing fancy about it. So, if someone comes to tell you what yom means and how different it is, it just means day. It could be used technically to refer to a 24-hour period, or it could be used non-technically to refer to a 24-hour period.

Both are possible, but only one is right for this passage. So, what does the Bible yield? Well, the question is not what day could or could not mean, but rather what it does mean here. First of all, I just want to assert that in our common parlance, using the word day, you would know exactly what I'm referring to without me ever explaining it to you, okay? We're going to do a little class exercise.

Don't raise your hands, okay? She came to my house the day before last. Am I talking about a day or am I talking about an era? I'm talking about a day. Now, what about this one? Back in the day, same words, I was a real punk.

Probably talking about more than one day, right, that I was a punk. I remember the day I decided to get married to my wife. I would be speaking of a concrete day.

What about this? I look forward to the day I'm no longer working a nine-to-five job and I can enjoy retirement. Well, that's talking about more than just one 24-hour period. And if we were to put it in the plural, the same is true.

Grandma loves to reminisce about the glory days, okay? She's speaking of an era. I need to get out and do yard work next week for at least three days. See, when you read the word day or hear it, you automatically have to categorize.

It's not some intrinsic meaning in the word itself, it's the surrounding words that tell you how it's being used. So, if we were to look at the use of yom in Scripture, it's used over 100 times in the Old Testament, connected to evening and morning. And in every single one of those situations, it always refers to a 24-hour time period.

Also, in all the places in Scripture where the word yom is associated with a number, it refers to a 24-hour time period, both of which are evident in Genesis chapter 1. Not only that, but good Bible students, when they're trying to figure out a tricky passage, say, does the Scripture speak anywhere else to this issue? This is the analogy of faith, the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, okay? Is there anywhere else that we could possibly think of in the Bible, maybe, that could shed light on what Moses means here? Well, very interestingly, double bonus points if it's the same author. And guess what? Moses talks about the days somewhere else. Moses is giving instruction in Exodus 23, 12 from the law, and he says, six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest.

He's already used that language in Genesis. He's using it again in Exodus. Then we have Moses speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of creation in Exodus 24, 16.

He says, the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it six days, and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. There you go, six days, a seventh day, Moses is using concrete language. He's referring to an actual week in Exodus 24.

And then finally, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 8, in the giving of the Decalogue, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.

Why? Verse 11, here's the grounding clause, the grounding purpose of this command in the Decalogue, for in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Reverends, when you read this account, every indication of the use of days that's used in the normal way that it would most commonly be used in the Old Testament to mean a day. And then you add the numeration of the days, which always then elsewhere relates specifically to concrete days.

Oh, and by the way, then you add evening and morning over a hundred times in the Old Testament that when used with day means one day. And so, I would posit this morning that the simple and obvious way of reading the text is the right one. And what I would posit further is that any opposing view is not a view that has come from the careful analysis and study of the details of the text.

It's an idea that's originated from outside of the text. And then we try to find a way to make that fit. Some people, of course, are concerned at the age of the earth, that the age would appear to be much older than it is if creation took place in six days.

Well, how do you reconcile? I mean, if it just took place in six days, the earth is probably 10,000 years old or less. How do we reconcile the hard science? Two ways that I could think of for this, okay? There's probably more. I'm a simple guy.

If I get past two, I'm going to forget the third. So two ways possible that this could have happened. There could be many more, okay? Number one, it is possible that science could be wrong, okay? It could be wrong.

I mean, almost in my lifetime, scientists were unanimous that the earth was going to be freezing over with an ice age. And then, of course, that got proven wrong, and now we're on the flip side, okay? It is possible that the science is being incorrectly interpreted, or what is so-called hard science is really an incorrect observation on our part. That even though we have a consensus, that's not the safe ground that we think it is.

And there's things that we still haven't discovered or understood. There's calculations that we're not making correctly. That's one possibility.

Second possibility, this one's way more fun. I don't know that it's actually likely, but it's pretty cool in my mind, would be that God created the earth, and it just appears old from the beginning. I mean, is that not possible? I was thinking about this.

If you and I had a time traveling machine, okay, so whatever your little, like, phone

booth or DeLorean or something, we're going to go back in time. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to get a couple of scientists, a couple of medical doctors, and a couple of moms, all right? It's a good group.

We're going to go back in time. We're going to go to day six of creation where Adam and Eve are there, and we're going to do a little examination of Adam and Eve, okay? None of these people know the creation account. We're just going to observe.

They're going to document it, okay? The scientists, the medical doctors, and the moms, all very knowledgeable. We're going to come back, say, okay, guys, how old are Adam and Eve? And you don't have divine revelation to tell you. I don't know, 15, 18, 25.

I don't know how old they look, but no one's going to say, that's a one-day-old, because they're all going to say, I know what a one-day-old looks like. They're not cognitively reasoning. They're not articulating things.

They're not fully developed into physical maturity, but what we encountered were two adults. So however it is that it came about, whether the earth looks old or young, isn't really in my wheelhouse, but I would say the humble response of faith is simply to say, I want to take the word as it is written, and if I can't computer connect the dots, I'm comfortable living in that tension. We're going to look at other arguments as we work through this, as we get into the details at specific points.

There's going to be points where it'll be helpful to draw those things out, but I want to leave you this morning is to step back and just marvel at the beauty of Genesis chapter 1. I want you to marvel at the beauty of Genesis chapter 1. I'm going to leave you this morning with a quote. This is written by a professor of chemistry, and it was regarding this desire for a scientific account of Genesis 1. I just want to want you to kind of soak in this reality and how beautiful it is. He says, quote, the sciences which probe most deeply into the ultimate facts of matter and life are probably astro-nuclear physics and biochemistry, but these sciences are written not so much in languages as in symbols.

It takes many pages of symbols to discuss the nature of a single atom of hydrogen. It has been estimated that to give a complete account of the position of the groups and bonds in a single virus of a molecular weight of 300 million would take a 200-page book just to document the molecular weight of one virus, 200 pages. He goes on and says if the scientific description of a single hydrogen atom or of a virus too small to be seen without a microscope takes a book, what hope is there of ever giving a scientific account of the creation of man and the universe? Yet Genesis 1 in its original form uses only 76 different root words.

If Genesis 1 were written in absolute scientific language to give an account of creation, there is no man alive, nor ever has there been, who could understand it. If it were written in any kind of scientific language, only the favored few could comprehend it. It would

have to be rewritten every generation to conform to the new views in terms of science.

It could not be written in our mid-20th century scientific language for no earlier generation could have grasped its meaning, and to our children it would have been out of date. The scientific description of how the universe is is beyond the understanding of any human brain. But Genesis 1 was written for all readers.

It was written for all readers. What then would be the best method for the creator to use for making a beginning to his book and establishing that the God of the Bible is also the God of creation in language simple enough for all men in all time? The answer is, of course, Genesis 1. The most amazing composition in all the world's literature, using only 76 word forms fundamental to all mankind, arranged in a wonderful pattern, yet free from any high-colored figures of speech, it provides the perfect opening to God's book, and get this, establishes all that men really need to know of the facts of creation. No one could have invented it.

It is as great a marvel as a plant or a bird. It is God's handiwork sufficient for Hebrew children or Greek thinkers or Latin Christians, for medieval knights or modern scientists or little children, for cottage dwellers or cattle ranchers or deep-sea fishermen, for Laplanders or Ethiopians, east or west, rich or poor, young or old, simple or learned. Sufficient for all.

Only God could write such a chapter, and He did. Will you pray with me? Lord, thank You so much for Genesis 1. Thank You for telling us how things really came into being. Pray, Lord, that You would help those of us who might be struggling with faith in taking You at Your Word.

I pray that their faith would be bolstered through this account. Lord, I pray that for those who have honest and sincere and genuine questions about the text and what it means, Lord, that You would allow us to traverse those questions as we go. And Lord, that You would be providing clarity to our hearts and minds that we might not be uncertain but rather certain about these things.

And Lord, as we study it, it might redound to greater praise and worship to You. In Jesus' name, amen.