

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

B. Kyle Keltz - AENC 2023

יום (yôm)

Ken Ham

- “The clear teaching and the most natural reading of Genesis 1–11, indeed the whole Bible, is that (1) God created the universe in six literal, approximately twenty-four-hour days about six thousand years ago.”

• Ken Ham, *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, p. 18.





William Lane Craig

- “I think a literal interpretation of Genesis would look very much like young-earth creationism. It would be that God created the universe 10–20 thousand years ago at most if not less than that, and that he did so in a sequence of miraculous acts [and] that this took place over consecutive 24-hour days.”

- YouTube - “What Does a Literal Interpretation of Genesis Look Like?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-x9sv6Dacf8>

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

- C. John Collins on *Yom*
- God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language
- Analogous God-Talk and the Bible
- *Yom* and Analogical Predication
- Exodus 20:8–11

C. John Collins on *Yom*

C. John Collins

Analogical Days View

- “All of this comes together to show that the best reading of the days is the one that Herman Bavinck offered: these creation days are ‘God’s workdays.’ Does the passage have any concern with our questions about how old the earth might be? I think not. . .”

• C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation*, 88.



C. John Collins

Analogical Days View

- “And if they are God’s workdays—analogous to human workdays—then exactly how long they were, or exactly how the activities might match what we find in the fossils, is not important.”

• C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical Conversation*, 88.



God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

C. John Collins on *Yom*

- Analogical Days View
 - Moses uses anthropomorphic language in Genesis 1 to describe God's "work week"
 - *Yom* is one of the words Moses uses analogically
 - So, *yom* will mean something analogous to "day"

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience

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God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience
 - God is an infinite, perfect, immaterial, and transcendent being
 - But our language only comes from finite, imperfect, mostly physical reality
 - Therefore, our language is inadequate to say anything meaningful about God

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience
 - Equivocal
 - Univocal
 - Analogous

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience
 - **Equivocal** - language in which the same word is used but it signifies completely different concepts when applied to the things that are being compared
 - Example: "The ball is red, and the politician is red."*

*Ramon M. Lemos, "Types of Predication and Forms of Theology," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1998), 4.

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience
 - **Univocal** - language in which the word used to compare two things signifies the same concept
 - Example: "These two balls are red."*

*Ramon M. Lemos, "Types of Predication and Forms of Theology," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1998), 4.

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- **The problem of religious language** - the philosophical problem resulting from the attempt to talk meaningfully about a transcendent and infinite reality with words derived from finite experience
 - **Analogous** - language in which the word used to compare two things signifies a similar, but not identical, concept
 - Example: "That ball is red [crimson], and the other ball is red [scarlet], too."

*Ramon M. Lemos, "Types of Predication and Forms of Theology," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1998), 4.

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- These types of predication can be used both literally and metaphorically:
 - Equivocal:
 - “The ball is red [literal], and the politician is red [metaphorical].”
 - “The side of the river is a bank [literal], and the financial institution is a bank [literal].”

*Ramon M. Lemos, “Types of Predication and Forms of Theology,” *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1998), 4–5.

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

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God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

God-Talk and the Problem of Religious Language

- These types of predication can be used both literally and metaphorically:
 - Analogous:
 - “That ball is red [crimson], and the other ball is red [scarlet], too [literal].”
 - “That man [who is aggressive and formidable] is a tiger [metaphorical].”

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Analogous God-Talk and the Bible

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Analogous God-Talk and the Bible

- Many places in the Bible use analogous language to describe God:
 - Metaphorical:
 - God is...
 - “a warrior” Ex. 15:3
 - “The Rock” Deut. 32:4
 - “like an eagle” Deut. 32:11

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Analogous God-Talk and the Bible

- Many places in the Bible use analogous language to describe God:
 - Literal:
 - God is...
 - “the Judge of the whole earth” Gen. 18:25
 - “your Father” Deut. 32:6

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Analogous God-Talk and the Bible

- Many places in the Bible use analogous language to describe God's actions:
 - Metaphorical:
 - God...
 - “saw that it was good” Gen. 1:10
 - “smelled the pleasing aroma” Gen. 8:21
 - “heard their groaning” Ex. 2:24
 - “will walk among you” Lev. 26:12

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Analogous God-Talk and the Bible

- Many places in the Bible use analogous language to describe God's actions:
 - Literal:
 - "The LORD God planted a garden in Eden" Gen. 2:8
 - "I [God] know that you did this with a clear conscience" Gen. 20:6
 - "he [God] loved your ancestors" Deut. 4:37

“All that we know about God from Scripture comes to us in terms that we understand because they describe events or things common to human experience. Using a more technical term, we can say that all that Scripture says about God uses anthropomorphic language — that is, language that speaks of God in human terms.”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1st ed., 281.

“This fact does not mean that Scripture gives us wrong or misleading ideas about God, for this is the way that God has chosen to reveal himself to us, and to reveal himself truly and accurately. Nonetheless, it should caution us not to take any of these descriptions by itself and isolate it from its immediate context or from the rest of what Scripture says about God.”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1st ed., 281.

“For example, we have an idea of love from human experience. That helps us to understand what Scripture means when it says that God is love, but our understanding of the meaning of “love” when applied to God is not identical with our experience of love in human relationships.”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1st ed., 282.

Yom and Analogical Predication

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses constantly uses analogical predication throughout Genesis 1
- For example:
 - 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day (Gen. 1:2–5; CSB).

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God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Yom and Analogical Predication

- If God's actions are analogical, then it seems that God's workday is analogical too:
 - 8 Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day **is like** a thousand years, and a thousand years **like** one day. (2 Pet. 3:8; CSB).

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Yom and Analogical Predication

- If God's actions are analogical, then it seems that God's workday is analogical too:
 - 4 For in your sight a thousand years **are like** yesterday that passes by, like a few hours of the night (Ps. 90:4; CSB).

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But why does Moses
specifically mention there
was evening and morning?

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Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses is emphasizing that God did not work at night between the days because he is teaching the Jewish people the pattern for their workweek:
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God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses is emphasizing that God did not work at night between the days because he is teaching the Jewish people the pattern for their workweek:
 - 15 On the day the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and it appeared like fire above the tabernacle from evening until morning. 16 It remained that way continuously: the cloud would cover it, appearing like fire at night (Num. 9:15–16; CSB).

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Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses is emphasizing that God did not work at night between the days because he is teaching the Jewish people the pattern for their workweek:
 - 23 Man goes out to his work
 and to his labor until evening (Ps. 104:23; CSB).

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses is emphasizing that God did not work at night between the days because he is teaching the Jewish people the pattern for their workweek:
 - 2 On the seventh day God had completed his **work** that he had done, and he **rested** on the seventh day from all his **work** that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and **declared** it holy, for on it he **rested** from all his **work** of creation (Gen. 2:2–3; CSB).

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Yom and Analogical Predication

- Moses is emphasizing that God did not work at night between the days because he is teaching the Jewish people the pattern for their workweek:
- For example:
 - 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God **(1)** said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God **(2)** saw that the light was good, and God **(3)** separated the light from the darkness. 5 God **(4)** called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” **(5) There was an evening, and there was a morning:** one day (Gen. 1:2–5; CSB).

Exodus 20:8-11

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

Exodus 20:8–11

- Is Moses teaching that God created in six, 24-hour periods?:
 - 8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: 9 You are to labor six days and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. 11 For the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy (Ex. 20:8–11; CSB).

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Exodus 20:8–11

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 - 8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: 9 You are to **labor** six days and do all your **work**, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You must **not do any work**—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. 11 For the Lord **made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he **rested** on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy (Ex. 20:8–11; CSB).

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Exodus 20:8–11

- Is Moses teaching that God created in six, 24-hour periods?:
 - 11 For the Lord **made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he **rested** on the seventh day (Ex. 20:11a; CSB).
 - “Made” and “work” are being used analogically;
 - “Rested” is being used analogically;
 - But “days” are understood univocally?

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Exodus 20:8–11

- Is Moses teaching that God created in six, 24-hour periods?:
 - 11 For the Lord **made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he **rested** on the seventh day (Ex. 20:11a; CSB).
 - “Made” and “work” are being used analogically and literally:
 - God does not work inside of time with His hands
 - Humans do not create things from nothing with the power of their will

God-Talk and the Age of the Earth

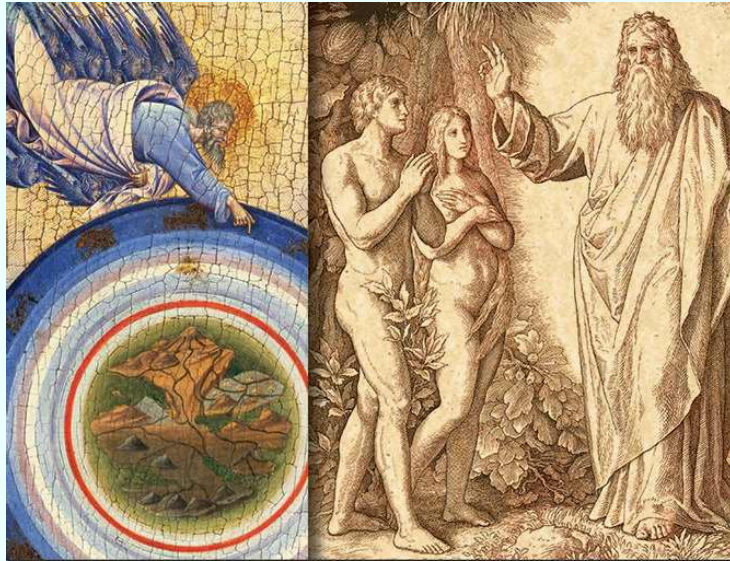
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 - 11 For the Lord **made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he **rested** on the seventh day (Ex. 20:11a; CSB).
 - “Rested” is being used analogically and literally:
 - God does not sleep or need a physical break

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Exodus 20:8–11

- Is Moses teaching that God created in six, 24-hour periods?:
 - 11 For the Lord **made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six **days**; then he **rested** on the seventh **day** (Ex. 20:11a; CSB).
 - “Days” are being used analogically and literally:
 - If all of God’s activity is being referred to analogically, it follows that the length of His activity is conveyed analogically as well



Reading Genesis 1-2

AN EVANGELICAL CONVERSATION

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SCIENCE & FAITH

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