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The Chronology of the Pentateuch (Part 1)

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This month we begin to set down in order comments on **all the calendrical** and chronological statements in the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy), gathering into one place all the fruits of our labors in this area.

1. The Days of Genesis 1

Despite the confusion and the tergiversations surrounding the seven days of creation, there can be little doubt but that the Scriptures intend us to take these as normal ("24-hour") days, for the following reasons:

1. The word "day" is defined in the text as "light-time": "And God called the light day" (Gen. 1:5). Thus, the use of "day" for the entire evening and morning period is by means of extension. The light-time comes later, replaces the dark-time, and is **eschatologically** definitive; thus, the word for light-time comes to be used for the entire period.

2. The word "day" seems to be used for a larger **period** of time in **Genesis 2:4** - "In the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven" - whether we read this clause with that which precedes or that which follows. This also must be an extended use. It cannot be read back into the days of Genesis 1, because an "age" or "period" of time does not have "evenings and morning s." Thus, the expression "evening and morning" is a strong line of evidence for taking these days as 24-hour days.

3. Exodus 20:8-11 states: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work . . . **for** in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth . . . and rested on the seventh day. " This verse states explicitly that God's reason for taking seven days to make the world was to set a pattern for humanity. God could have made the world instant] y or over 20 billion years. He could have made it in 6 seconds or in 6 million years. In neither case, however, would He have been setting a pattern for human labor.

4. It is objected that Genesis 1 is accommodated to the thought-forms of ancient people. The ancient Hebrews were surrounded by cultures that had long mythological histories. Genesis 1 stands in stark contrast to this. Moses, with his Egyptian education, would have been just as happy if God had told him that the creation took billions of years.

5. Some have said that since the sun was created on the fourth day to mark out the distinction between day and night, the first three days cannot be said to be solar days. That is quite true: They were not **solar** days. This, however, says nothing about their length. It is clear from Genesis 1 that the sun was made to tit the **pre-existent** length of the day, not the other way around. The first three days were the same length as the last three.

6. Some have rammed a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. There is nothing in the text that even hints at such a possibility. Gap theories were the rage in the 19th century in England and America, but there never was any foundation for any of them. (Gaps were also tossed into the chronologies of Genesis 5 and 11, and between Daniel's 69th and 70th week.)

7. It is objected that the "days" of Genesis 1 are literary markers, not real time periods. This is called the Framework Hypothesis, the notion that the seven days of Genesis 1 are merely a literary framework. The only "evidence" for this notion I have ever seen presented is that supposedly Genesis 2:5 contradicts Genesis 1:11, showing that we should not take Genesis 1 literally. That is, Genesis 2:5 says that plants were not made until after man was made, while Genesis 1:11 says that plants were made on the third day. Anyone can see, however, that this is a specious argument, and it is even clearer in Hebrew. Genesis 1:11 says that God created grains and fruit-trees on the third day, the foundations respectively of bread and wine. Genesis 2:5 says that before man was made, the

not yet sprouted. Traditional commentaries discuss this matter clearly, and the Frameworker argument at this point is based simply in sheer ignorance both of the text of Scripture and of the history of interpretation.

Moreover, the framework notion falls before evidence from **Exodus 25-31**. There we see God giving orders to Moses to build the Tabernacle. There are seven speeches from the Lord, each introduced by a formula: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying" (Ex. **25:1**; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12). As has been pointed out by others, and argued at length by me, these seven speeches follow the order of the seven days of Genesis 1. (See Peter J. Kearney, "Creation and **Liturgy**: The P Redaction of Exodus 25-40," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* **89** [1977]: 375-86; and James B. Jordan, "The Tabernacle: A New Creation" [Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1993].) The reason for this is that the Tabernacle is a microcosm. In fact, the description of the Dwelling in Exodus 25:1-27:19 also has seven paragraphs. Thus, the Scriptures are perfectly capable of setting out heptamerous literary sequences without the use of "days." If Genesis 1 were only concerned with seven "categories," the word "**day**" would not have been used.

It is interesting to note that the Framework Hypothesis has been thoroughly refuted over and over again, and yet it seems to have more adherents today than ever before. G. C. Aalders of the Free University of Amsterdam pointed out in 1932 that (1) in the text of Genesis 1 there is not a single allusion to suggest that the days are to be regarded as a merely stylistic device, and that (2) Exodus 20:11 presents God's activity as a pattern for man, and this fact presupposes that there was a reality in the activity of God that man is to copy. As E. J. Young of Westminster Theological Seminary pointed out in his book *Studies in Genesis One* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1964), no one bothered to answer Aalders. Young himself went on for fifty pages refuting the Framework Hypothesis, and to my knowledge nobody has tried to refute Young.

Recently, Kenneth Gentry has summarized the exegetical arguments against the Framework Hypothesis as follows: "(1) 'Day' is qualified by 'evening and morning' (**Gen. 1:5**, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), which specifically limits the time-frame. (2) The very same word 'day' is used on the fourth day to define a time period that is governed by the sun, which must be a regular day (**Gen. 1:14**). (3) In the 119 instances of the Hebrew word 'day' (yore) standing in conjunction with a numerical adjective (first, second, etc.) in the writings of Moses, it never means anything other than a literal day. Consistency would require that this structure must so function in Genesis 1. (4) Exodus 20:9-11 patterns man's work week after God's original work week, which suggests the literality of the creation week. (5) In Exodus 20:11 the plural for the "days" of creation is **used**. In the 702 instances of the plural "days" in the

Commission [Tyler, TX: ICE, 1991], p. 9.)

Moreover, the Framework Hypothesis has to hold that the events recounted in Genesis 1 never happened. Quite apart from the matter of "days," Genesis 1 makes a whole series of claims that the Framework Hypothesis says are false.

Let's be clear about this: We are discussing what the text claims happened. Genesis 1:7 says that an event happened in which God made a "firmament" and separated waters above the firmament from those below. The Framework Hypothesis says that this event never happened. According to it, all Genesis 1:7 means is that this configuration came into being as a result of the evolutionary plan of God.

Genesis 1:9 says that God gathered all the waters on the earth into one place, and that the dry land appeared. The Framework Hypothesis says that as an event, this never happened.

Repeatedly throughout the chapter, the text claims that God said things. **These** are events. We might interpret Genesis 1 and suppose that since human beings were not on the scene, God did not "speak" in audible tones. We might even say that these phrases mean that He "put forth His Word," and thus refer to the work of the Second Person of the Trinity. The point, however, is that the text claims that God did these things, said these things, as discrete *actions*. The Framework Hypothesis says that God never did these things, that no such individual acts ever occurred. According to the Framework Hypothesis, all Genesis 1 means is that God's Word (or "wordness") lies behind everything that came into being over the course of who knows how long a time. The Framework Hypothesis denies that there was a certain time in history when God said "Let there be light," and another, different, event in history when God said, "Let the waters teem."

To put it simply, Genesis 1 clearly claims that certain events took place, and the Framework Hypothesis says that those events simply did not take place. The Framework Hypothesis denies the specific claims of the text: The text as it stands is in error; these things never actually happened. **All** we are supposed to learn from the text, according to the Framework Hypothesis, is the *idea* that God made everything, and ordered it.

Therefore, according to the Framework Hypothesis, God never told Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply, etc." as recorded in Genesis 1:28-30. If the Frameworker wants to say, "Oh, no; I believe God really **did** say those words to Adam and Eve," then we have to ask the Frameworker: "By what hermeneutics do you take Genesis 1:28-30 literally, while taking the events of the other days figuratively?" Consistently requires that either all seven days, and their events, are intended figuratively; or else they are intended literal] y.

Now, the **Frameworker** may reply, "Well, perhaps God never actually spoke those words to Adam and Eve,

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ing it pretty bad, but let's grant the point because it introduces another problem for the **Frameworker**.

If we take Genesis 1 & 2 literally, then we find that God made Adam, told Adam not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, then made Eve, and told them both that every tree would be for them to eat (**Gen. 2:7, 17, 22; 1:29**). The literal interpretation shows us that the prohibition on the Tree of Knowledge was temporary, because eventually they would get to eat of every tree. Also, the literal interpretation leaves us with the impression that Eve learned about the temporary prohibition from Adam.

If, however, we go with the Framework Hypothesis, then God may never have told Adam and Eve that they would eat of every **tree**. In that case, they would not have known that the prohibition was only temporary. Perhaps the prohibition was permanent, and there is a "contradiction." **between** Genesis 1 (every tree) and Genesis 2 (every tree except one). The Frameworker can resolve this "contradiction" by saying that God never spoke Genesis 1:28-29 to Adam and Eve, but that these verses only give us the general idea that we can eat of any tree.

Now, we come up with two different ideas of Original Sin from these two interpretations. The literal interpretation sees Adam and Eve disobeying God, but also sees that their sin involved impatience, seizing something God had said they would get later but not now. The **Frameworker** interpretation sees the disobedience aspect, but has no reason to think that impatience was involved in this first sin, because according to the Frameworker, God did not say to Adam and Eve that every tree would be for them (**Gen. 1:29**).

As the reader can see, there are very serious problems with the Framework Hypothesis, and serious consequences of advocating it. We can summarize our critique by saying (1) there is absolutely no positive evidence in the Bible to suggest that the days of Genesis 1 are only a literary framework; (2) there is abundant evidence in the Bible that these are sequential days of normal ("24-hour") length; (3) the advocates **of the** Framework Hypothesis have **never** answered their critics at all, and continue to advocate their position without the slightest foundation; and (4) the Framework Hypothesis leads to some very serious **hermeneutical** and theological consequences.

Is there any evidence for what time of year the creation week occurred? Biblically, both the autumn and the spring are taken as starting points for the calendar. In the northern hemisphere, the fall begins the evening of the solar year, while the spring begins its morning. Later on, Passover was in the spring, the beginning of the **lunar year**, while the Day of Atonement was in the fall, the beginning of the **solar year**. Since the evening of the year comes in autumn, and Genesis 1 speaks of evening's coming before morning, there is a tradition of seeing the creation as taking place in autumn. For a fuller discussion of this point, see section 3 below.

2. When Did Adam Fall?

When did the **Fall** of man take place? It could not have taken place on the sixth day, because at the end of that day everything was still very good (**Gen. 1:31**).

Some have suggested that Adam and Eve lived a long time in the Garden before disobeying God. This is very unlikely. Human psychology is such that the more Adam and Eve resisted temptation, the stronger they would become. It is clear that they fell into sin at the first opportunity, which means they fell right away. The sheer naivete of the situation excludes any other option.

When did God come to judge Adam and Eve? Genesis 3:8 is usually translated in such a way that the Lord God came walking in the "**breeze**" or "cool" of the day. This is often taken to be in the evening, but later Scripture associate the coming of the Lord and of His judgments with sunrise, not with sunset. Genesis 3:8 literally reads the "breath" or "Spirit" of the **day**, which points not to the time of day but to the conveyance of God's presence by the Holy Spirit. Thus, I hazard to guess that Adam and Eve sinned during the night of the sabbath, and the Lord arrived in the morning to conduct sabbath worship. Sunrise rather than afternoon makes the most sense, since the rest of Scripture makes it plain that humanity did not enter into God's sabbath. Thus, Adam and Eve had sinned before God came for the first sabbath worship service.

Later in the Bible, the first daily sacrifice is ordered to be offered "between the evenings," that is, between sunset and dark; i.e., during twilight. This is most **pointedly** required of Passover (Ex. 12:6). It seems to me that since the sacrifices pay the price for man's sin, the timing of these sacrifices points to the time of man's sin.

The following chronology makes the most sense to me:

Day 6, morning: God creates land animals (**Gen. 1:24-25**).

Day 6, noon: God creates Adam (**Gen. 2:7**).

God tells Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit (**Gen. 2:17**).

God brings animals for Adam to name (**Gen. 2:19**).
God creates Eve from Adam's rib (**Gen. 2:22**).

Day 6, afternoon: God blesses Adam and Eve (**Gen. 1:28-30**).

Day 6, sunset: Everything is very good (**Gen. 1:31**).

Day 7, evening: Adam tells Eve about the forbidden fruit. Satan tempts Eve, Adam standing by (**Gen. 3:6**).
Fall of Adam and Eve (**Gen. 3:1-6**).

Adam and Eve work during the night to make clothing (this would have taken some time; **Gen. 3:7**).

Day 7, morning: God arrives for sabbath worship, making the Holy Place in the center of the Garden into a Most Holy Place by means of His presence (**Gen. 2:9; 3:8**).

not enter into sabbath rest (**Heb. 4**).

The conclusion of this is that the **fall** of man took place on the seventh day, or at the very least quite soon after the creation.

3. The Sacrifice of Abel and the Time of the New Year

When did Cain kill Abel? Obviously we cannot be sure, but there are two relevant considerations. First, it was most likely shortly before AM 130, because Seth was born soon after (**Gen. 4:25; 5:3**). Second, it is reasonable to assume that Cain already had a wife (a sister), because if he had **been** driven out before marrying it would have been difficult for him to obtain one from Adam and Eve afterwards.

What time of year? Genesis **4:3** states that the two men offered sacrifice "at the end of days." This expression can simply mean "after many days," but in the present context almost certainly designates harvest and thus means in the autumn, the same time as the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Ingathering in later Israel's calendar.

"At the end of days" is literally "at the cutting off (*gets*) of days." This almost certainly at the end of the harvest. It was Cain, apparently, who was in a position to determine this change of time: He was the farmer as well as the firstborn son of the house. Abel followed his lead and also brought a sacrifice.

The term *gets* is interesting. It always indicates the cut off point of some set period of time. It is related phonetically to the words *qatsir* (harvest) and *qatsar* (to reap, cut down). [Hebrew lexicons ascribe *gets* and *qatsir* to two different roots, but this is speculative and depends on an evolutionary view of the development of language. The ear readily connects the two, and the connection in meaning is also clear.] The harvest entails cutting down the fruit of the ground, and is the cutting off point for the agricultural or national year. This time is also spoken of as the "going forth of the year" in Exodus 23:16.

Because this is a debated point, I want to demonstrate my position more fully. Does "the cutting off of days"

simply mean "after a time," or does it mean "at the end of the year"? What we notice is that the term *gets*, when used with a specific length of time, means the definite end of that definite period of time:

Gen. **8:6** - at the cutting off of 40 days.

Num. 13:25- at the cutting off of 40 days.

Dt. 9:11 - at the cutting off of 40 days.

Jud. 11:39- at the cutting off of 2 months.

Is. 23:15, 17- at the cutting off of 70 years.

Jer. **42:7** - at the cutting off of 10 days.

Ezk. 29:13- at the cutting off of 40 years.

Some passages clearly indicate the cutting off as the time of harvest, the actual end of the solar or national year:

Dt. 15:1 - at the cutting off of every 7 years.

Dt. 31:10- at the cutting off of every 7 years.

Jer. 34:14- at the cutting off of 7 years.

Other passages hint that the cutting off of the years spoken of was in the autumn:

2 Sam. 14:26- at the cutting off of every year. **Absalom** cut his hair at the end of every year.

2 Sam. **15:7** - at the cutting off of 40 (or perhaps 4) years. **Absalom** goes to sacrifice at this time, which may well have been at the turn of the year.

1 Ki. **2:39** - at the cutting off of 3 years. Shimei, Solomon's last enemy, is killed. Now the Temple can be built, in the fourth year (1 Ki. 6: 1). Thus, this event **most likely closed** out Solomon's first three years.

2 **Chron.** 8:1 - at the cutting off of 20 years. This was in the autumn, as can be seen from 2 Kings **8:2**.

2 Chron. 21:19- at the cutting off of 2 years. Since the reigns of the kings were dated by solar years, beginning in autumn, the death of **Jehoram** may well have been right at the end of his last year.

(continued next month)