

From Tradition unto Truth

Bud Chrysler – June 2021

Part One – THE DIVINE DAYS OF EXODUS 20:11 AND 31:17

The Genesis account of creation reaches its climax in the Lord's observance of the Sabbath:

Genesis 2:1-4 – *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.*

Israel's observance of the Sabbath thereafter is a remembrance and an affirmation of their faith in Him as they fulfill the fourth commandment:

Exodus 20:8-10 – *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.*

Moses was to teach the children of Israel:

Exodus 24:12 – *And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; **that thou mayest teach them.***

Deuteronomy 4:13-14 – *And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. **And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments,** that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.*

I here intend to demonstrate that Moses, in fulfilling his responsibility to teach the children of Israel, uttered explanatory statements to them, after reciting the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Deuteronomy 5:15). In two of those statements (Exodus 20:11 and 31:17b), Moses spoke of "days" and may have intended for them to be understood as "God's days" or "divine days" (grand in scale) within which the Lord God created heaven and earth:

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.*

Exodus 31:17b – *...for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.*

Another example of an explanatory statement by Moses while reciting the fourth commandment can be found in Deuteronomy 5:15.

Deuteronomy 5:4–25 consists of the re-telling of the Ten Commandments to the younger generation who were to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy chapter five and Exodus chapter twenty are virtually identical, with Moses reciting the Ten Commandments in each. But the phrases which follow the fourth commandment in each book differ in content.

Interestingly, the phrase “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...” is absent in the Deuteronomy account of the fourth Commandment – which goes on to say that nothing more was added: Deuteronomy 5:22 – *These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.* According to this verse, Moses’ explanatory statement found twice in the book of Exodus, “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...” was not spoken by the Lord or written in the two tables of stone.

A man whom I respect and admire, Ken Ham, founder and chief executive officer of the Young Earth creationist ministry Answers in Genesis, has a different opinion on this particular subject:

“Now, when the Creator God spoke as recorded in Exodus 20:1, what did He (Jesus) say? As we read on, we find this statement: ‘for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day’ (Exodus 20:11).”

“Yes, Jesus did explicitly say He created in six days. Not only this, but the one who spoke the words ‘six days’ also wrote them down for Moses: ‘Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly’ (Deuteronomy 9:10).”

“Jesus said clearly that He created in six days. And He even did something He didn’t do with most of Scripture – He wrote it down Himself. How clearer and more authoritative can you get than that?” (K. Ham, *The New Answers Book 1*, 2006, p. 258).

There is another reason to believe that Moses’ explanatory statement, “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...” was not spoken by the Lord. The phrase following the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy 5:15 says: *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.* According to E. W. Bullinger, this verse is a parenthetical break in Moses’ recital of the fourth commandment, in view of their shortly having servants of their own (*The Companion Bible*, 1974, p. 246). If we agree with Bullinger regarding the parenthetical statement in Deuteronomy 5:15 then we can infer that Moses’ statements, after reciting the fourth commandment, in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17b could also be parenthetical in nature.

In Deuteronomy, Moses' comments ("and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt..."), after reciting the fourth commandment, are **historical remembrance**; as the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt, they should allow their own slaves one day of rest per week. This is in keeping with Deuteronomy's humanistic emphasis and concern for the social good.

In Exodus, Moses' comments ("for in six days"), after reciting the fourth commandment, are **theological**; harking back to the creation story in Gen 1:1-2:4a, where God rests on the seventh day after the labor of creation (Gen 2:2).

Exodus 31:17 begins with Moses' recital of the fourth commandment (words originally spoken by the Lord God – incorporating 1st person) and ends with what may be a personal statement (words spoken by Moses – incorporating 3rd person):

Exodus 31:17a – *It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever:*

Exodus 31:17b – *for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.*

Examples in Scripture of the pattern of six periods of activity and one of rest, paralleling the different stages involved as the Lord God made heaven and earth and then rested, are plentiful but the patterns do not consist solely of days paralleling days: *If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing* (Exodus 21:2). The emphasis being on the pattern (not the duration) is clearly seen in Exodus 23:10-12, where the pattern begins with reference to "years" and ends with reference to "days": *And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.*

The annual pattern of six and one is also found in Leviticus 25:3-5:

Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which growth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 and Daniel 9:2 both speak of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity but when this same seventy-year period is mentioned in connection with the Sabbath, the familiar pattern of six (in this case sixty) and one (in this case ten) appears once again: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years (II Chronicles 36:21).

Throughout Scripture, the pattern of six-and-one parallels decades, years, or days interchangeably with the different stages of God's creative activity and rest. The duration of time within those patterns is irrelevant; the pattern itself being the focus. Therefore, the word "days" as used by Moses in his explanatory (parenthetical) statements recorded in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, could have been used simply to illustrate the pattern of six-and-one as an aid in teaching the children of Israel.

The idea that the statements made in Exodus 20:11, 31:17b and Deuteronomy 5:15 may be parenthetical does not mean that the verses are to be disregarded, but it allows us to put them in their proper context – Exodus 20:11, 31:17b do not reflect claims, made by the Lord God, that He created all things in six days.

The German theologian, John Peter Lange, effectively demonstrates why the six days mentioned in Exodus 20:11 should be thought of as God's divine-days or epochs:

"...the Fourth Commandment: '...six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, ...for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth.' ...a careful study shows that there is something more than first strikes us. It might be replied that there is no difference of radical idea... but a vast difference in the scale. God's days of working, it is said, must be the same with man's days of working, because they are mentioned in such close connection. Then God's work and man's work must also be the same, or on the same grade for a similar reason. The Hebrew word is the same for both: 'In six days shalt thou labor and do (asah) all thy work; for in six days the Lord made (asah, made, wrought) heaven and earth.' Is there no transition here to a higher idea? And so of the resting: 'The seventh shall be to thee a Sabbath (shabath, a rest), for the Lord thy God rested (shabath) on the seventh day,' – words of the same general import, but the less solemn or more human term here applied to Deity."

"What a difference there must have been between God's work and man's work, - above all, between God's ineffable repose and the rest demanded for human weariness. Must we not carry the same difference into the times, and make a similar ineffable distinction between the divine working-days and the human working-days of our lower chronology? ...The lower, or earthly, day is made a memorial of the higher. We are called to remember by it. In six (human) days do all thy work; for in six (divine) days the Lord made heaven and earth. ...It is the manner of the Scriptures thus to make times and things on earth representatives, or under-types, of things in the heavens, - Heb. 9:23. Viewed from such a standpoint these parallelisms in the language of the Fourth Commandment suggest of themselves a vast difference between the divine and the human days, even if it were the only argument the Bible furnished for that purpose. As the work to the work, as the rest to the rest, so are the times to the times" (John Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures – Genesis*, 1868, pp.135-136).

Isaiah 55:8-9 – *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Summary

It has here been demonstrated that the word “days,” as used by Moses’ in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, could be interpreted as “God’s days” (something other than twenty-four-hour periods) because, throughout Scripture, the pattern of six-and-one parallels decades, years, or days interchangeably with six periods of God’s creative activity and one of rest. Accordingly, the phrase, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth...” probably was an incorporation the pattern of six-and-one and not a direct reference to the time involved in the creative process, which then could have taken longer than six twenty-four-hour days.

Let me be clear that I am not promoting the Long-Day Theory in interpreting the first chapter of Genesis. That discussion will have to wait for another time. In any case, it is important for us to remember that the chief purpose of the Bible is the revelation of the way of salvation through the shed blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Another pattern

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (I Timothy 1:15-17). The Lord Jesus Christ used Paul as a pattern for our learning. Paul did nothing to earn his salvation; it was a gift from God as an example of His grace and mercy.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Part Two – THE GENESIS TABLETS

Archaeology is a relatively new science, the benefits of which have not been available to us until about the last hundred and fifty years or so. But we now have the distinct advantage of incorporating tangible evidence along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our efforts to clearly understand Scripture. A man by the name of P. J. Wiseman became familiar with ancient Babylonian tablets and noticed similarities in literary form to that of the book of Genesis. His “Tablet Theory” caught the attention of more than a few Bible scholars. Professor R. K. Harrison wrote:

“An important step towards an understanding of the manner in which Genesis was compiled in the light of the ancient Babylonian ‘life-situation’ was made in 1936 by P. J. Wiseman. A British air-commodore of decidedly antiquarian bent, Wiseman examined the literary forms of ancient Babylonian tablets with a view to solving the literary problem of the origin of Genesis. From the existence of colophons, catch-lines, scribal dating, and other devices of antiquity familiar to the Assyriologist, Wiseman argued towards the presence of similar phenomena in the bulk of

Genesis. He interpreted the enigmatic phrase ‘these are the generations of’ as in fact constituting a colophon in the text, and pointing to the preceding verses as a complete unit which in cuneiform would have constituted a tablet. He further adduced the presence in the early Genesis narratives of such Babylonian literary mechanisms as scribal attempts at dating, the linking of passages in series, specific titles of sections, and the use of catch-lines.”



An inscribed clay tablet (ca. 2000 B.C. – the time of Abraham)

Note the last line (under the blank space) which forms the colophon. The colophon often incorporates the title, the date of writing, and the name of the scribe or owner.

“Wiseman’s theory postulated documentary sources for Genesis although of a completely different nature from those suggested by the adherents of the Graf-Welhausen school. He stressed the strictly Mesopotamian nature of much of the source-material which he had uncovered, and suggested that it had been combined with the Joseph narratives to form the book of Genesis, presumably under the direct influence of Moses. His approach had the distinct advantage of relating the ancient Mesopotamian life-situation, unlike the attempts of the Graf-Welhausen school, and showed that the methods of writing and compilation employed in Genesis were in essential harmony with the processes current among the scribes of ancient Babylonia.”

“Accordingly, the present writer feels justified in following Wiseman in the assertion that Genesis contains in the first thirty-six chapters a series of tablets whose contents were linked together to form a roughly chronological account of primeval and patriarchal life written from the standpoint of a Mesopotamian cultural milieu” (R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1969, pp. 63, 64, 548).

If Wiseman is right about the colophons coming at the end of each of the eyewitness’s accounts, it would indicate that the book of Genesis is made up of tablets which were written or owned by an eyewitness to the events described therein. These “family records” would have been eventually compiled by Moses, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, probably during the Exodus (ca. 1450 B.C.) and should be considered historically reliable. Professor Emeritus Dale Dewitt, of Grace Bible College (Grace Christian University), wrote:

“... there is good reason to think in terms of the writing rather than oral transmission of the traditions of Genesis in the Bronze Age. The evidence is clear for the writing of “books” in that period. No longer should the cultural milieu be thought of as something in addition to the development of writing and writing formats. Rather the cultural background of the patriarchs includes the development of writing and its application to bookmaking and record-making. Since the format of such a Bronze Age “book” can be traced in Genesis, there is reason to place the original writing of the history as well as the history itself in the Bronze Age” (Dale S. Dewitt, *Bible and Spade, The Generations of Genesis*, 2011).

THE GENESIS TABLETS

The generations of the heavens and of the earth (Septuagint – This is the book of the generation of heaven and earth – The story of creation (ending at Genesis 2:4). Pre-Pottery Neolithic – 10th-7th millennium.

The book of the generations of Adam – Early man and his fall (beginning at Genesis 2:5 – ending at Genesis 5:1). Including the Neolithic Period (Pottery Neolithic) 6th and 5th millennium.

The generations of Noah – The wickedness of man (ending at Genesis 6:9). The Chalcolithic Period – 4th millennium and The Early Bronze I and II – 3100 -2650 B.C.

The generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth – The flood (ending at Genesis 10:1). The Early Bronze III and IV – 2650 – 2200 B.C.

The generations of Shem – The tower of Babel and the people scattered (ending at Genesis 11:10). Early Bronze IV and The Middle Bronze I – 2350 – 1950 B.C.

The generations of Terah – Family line from Shem to Abram (ending at Genesis 11:27). The Middle Bronze I and II A – 2250 – 1730 B.C.

The generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son – From the birth of Abram to his burial by Isaac and Ishmael (ending at Genesis 25:12). The Middle Bronze II A-B-C – 2000 – 1550 B.C.

The generations of Isaac, Abraham's son – From the birth of Abram to his burial by Isaac and Ishmael (ending at Genesis 25:19). The Middle Bronze II A-B-C – 2000 – 1550 B.C.

The generations of Esau – From the birth of Esau and Jacob to the burial of Isaac (ending at Genesis 36:1) The Middle Bronze II A-B-C – 2000 – 1550 B.C.

The generations of Esau – From the birth of Esau and Jacob to the burial of Isaac (ending at Genesis 36:9) The Middle Bronze II A-B-C – 2000 – 1550 B.C.

The generations of Jacob – From the birth of Esau and Jacob to the burial of Isaac (ending at Genesis 37:2) The Middle Bronze II A-B-C – 2000 – 1550 B.C.