

Notes on the Day-Age Theory

By Mike Stallard

Introduction

While the Gap Theory is decreasing in popularity, it seems that the Day-Age Theory is widely held in some form by Christians who attempt to hold onto the Bible account of creation but believe in a long age for the earth. Below is a definition and refutation of this approach from a biblical point of view.

Definition

The following points seem to emerge as the major ideas that make up the Day-Age Theory:

- I. The word day in Gen. 1 (example: the evening and the morning were the first day –v. 5) should be taken in a symbolic or general sense rather than a literal 24-hour sense. Justification is taken from other uses in the Bible such as the phrase “day of the Lord” which refers generally to the day of God’s judgment rather than to a specific 24-hour period. Also appeals are made to such passages as 2 Peter 3:8 which says that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” The result is that instead of six creation days one ends up with six creation “ages.”
- II. Each of these ages can be an extremely long time (millions or billions of years) thus accommodating the geologic time scale which is used to justify a long age for the earth and usually to make room for evolution. Another argument used to justify this long age from the Bible is the assertion that God is still resting from His work of creation, that is, the seventh day is still continuing. Thus, if the 7th day is longer than 24 hours surely we can allow the first 6 days to be the same.
- III. There is an accompanying view of theistic evolution (God used evolution as his way of creating) or of progressive creation, usually the latter among Christians. Progressive creation is the idea that at the end of each age God intervenes in the process of creation to create something new. This approach is especially attractive to those who want to account for the gaps in the fossil record without an appeal to Lucifer’s Flood (Gap Theory) or Noah’s Flood (literal view).
- IV. There are variations within the Day-Age approach:
 - A. Some hold to literal creation days with gaps or ages between each literal day. This is really a compounding of the gap theory idea.
 - B. Some hold to overlapping ages. That is, the ages are not consecutive but overlap each other. Basically, the time sequence in the Genesis account is ignored. As will be seen below, this is done for scientific reasons, not because of anything the Bible says.

Refutation

I cannot hold to the Day-Age theory for the following reasons:

1. The normal meaning of “day” in scripture is a 24-hour period unless the context dictates otherwise. Never in the Bible is the Hebrew word “day” (yom) preceded or modified by a number without referring to a twenty-four hour day.
2. The context of the Genesis creation week indicates a 24-hour day. Notice the following:
 - “Day” is defined in terms of light/darkness and day/night (see 1:5). This suggests the normal day/night cycle.
 - “Day” is defined in terms of evening and morning again suggesting the same thing (see 1:5).
 - On the fourth day God made the Sun, Moon, and stars. Specifically the text says that these mark off times, seasons, days, and even night and day. Thus, from day four on it would seem that the word “day” would normally carry the meaning of a 24-hour period. It is logical to believe then that days one through three would be the same.
3. Under the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 the seven day week for the Israelites is to be the same as the creation week experienced by God (literal days). How else would Moses have taken it?
4. The appeal to Gen. 2:2 and God’s continuing rest (7th day) is flat wrong! It does not say that God “is resting” but that he “rested” (completed action). In fact, other passages seem to indicate that God’s rest is over and that He has finished his rest and has been refreshed and now works although not in creation work (Ex. 31:17, John 5:17). Furthermore, Gen. 2:3 says that God blessed the 7th day and sanctified it. But would this be true if the 7th day consisted of all of earth history since then including the entrance of sin into the world in Gen. 3? Did God bless that?
5. The appeal to 2 Pet. 3:8 (one day = 1000 years) backfires. If you examine the text, it is saying that God does not need a long time to work. He can do in one day what man might think takes a long time. The text is a response to uniformitarian thinking!
6. There are numerous contradictions between the uniformitarian approach and the Genesis account of creation which indicate that the Day-Age theory does not really make sense of the biblical data in trying to account for the geologic scientific information:

Uniformitarianism	Bible
Matter existed in the beginning	Matter created by God in beginning
Sun and stars before earth	Earth before sun and stars
Land before oceans	Oceans before land
Sun is earth's first light	Light before the Sun
Contiguous atmosphere and hydrosphere	Atmosphere between two hydrosphere's
Marine organisms first life	Land plants first life
Fish before fruit trees	Fruit trees before fish
Insects before birds	Birds before insects (creeping things)
Sun before land plants	Land vegetation before Sun
Reptiles before birds	Birds before reptiles (creeping things)
Woman before man (genetics)	Man before woman (creation)
Rain before man	Man before rain

The above tabulation is a bit sketchy and could be expanded further. It points out the impossibility of harmonizing a straight-forward Day-Age approach of the biblical record with current scientific views of how things went. But this is what the Day-Age theory was designed to do. This is what makes some proponents of a Day-Age approach see overlapping days to prevent problems such as vegetation before Sun. But this symbolic approach to Bible interpretation allows you to pour into the Bible anything that you want.

10. As noted earlier in my notes on the Gap Theory scientific evidence can be interpreted to yield a young age for the earth. Notes will be given on this in the future. If that is assumed for sake of argument, then the Day-Age theory is contradicted not only by the Bible evidence but also by scientific study. Again, there are some good Christians who hold to this theory. They are not bad people. They are just tragically wrong on their approach to the Genesis account of creation.