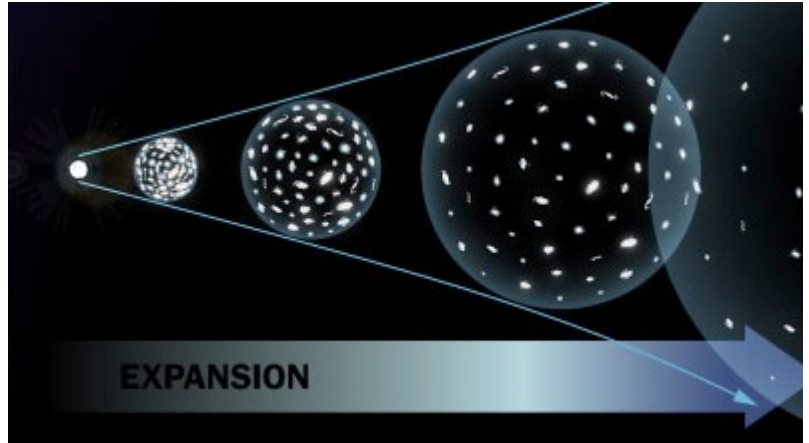


Is the universe only six thousand years old?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”—Genesis 1:1

Modern astronomical science now agrees with the Bible that the universe had a beginning. Many people, including those who believe in Young Earth Creationism (YEC), think that the entire universe, including the earth, was created in six literal 24 hour days 6,000 years ago. This idea is in conflict with astronomical science, which has proven the universe is about 13.7 billion years old. Two lines of evidence for this are the number of light years away the farthest galaxies are from us, and the second is the Cosmic Background Radiation. Astronomers and scientists are forced to accept this fact, even though they are uncomfortable with the Biblical implications.

YEC actually contradicts the Bible itself in a number of ways, some of which will be mentioned here. (For an in-depth discussion of this issue, please see the book “A MATTER OF



If the universe is expanding, it had a beginning. Is it only six thousand years old?

DAYS” by Hugh Ross.) People who are aware of the proven scientific facts that the universe had a beginning about 13.7 billion years ago make fun of the Bible and Christianity because of YEC. This is unfortunate, and there is no need for it.

Did God ‘Speak the Universe Into Existence’?

“Praise him sun and moon . . . stars . . . at his command they were created”—Psalm 148:3,5 NIV

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light”—Genesis 1:3 NKJV

YEC adherents boldly assert that God simply spoke the universe into existence, from nothing. There was no gradual process. When the Bible is read superficially, or viewed in an overly simplified way, wrong conclusions as to its meaning can, and often are, drawn. The above verses are some typical examples of this. Yes, God commanded, and things were created. However, there is much more to it than that. The Bible neither says, nor implies, that ‘God simply “spoke”, and –“poof”– the entire universe as it exists today instantaneously came into existence about 6,000 years ago. The Bible says that, **“Yahweh . . . created the heavens and spread them out” (Isaiah 42:5 NJB)**. In full agreement with modern astronomical science, the Bible, 2,700 years ago, used language which implies the universe started very small and expanded from that point. The universe is still expanding at just the critical rate, so that it will go on expanding forever, without collapsing in on itself, or flying apart so as to lose the gravitational bound of stars and galaxies, etc. The process of stars dying and being born is going on constantly throughout the universe.

Was the Big Bang a Random Explosion?

“Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth” (Job 38:33 NIV). God must have established the physical **“laws”** which govern the universe prior to the so-called ‘Big Bang’ creation event that started the universe off into

existence. This event was not chaotic or disorderly, but was very orderly. There was nothing, and then God transformed energy into matter from a point of singularity, which then expanded into the universe that exists today. **“Yahweh . . . spread out the heaven” (Zechariah 12:1 NJB)**. The beginning of the universe, the Big Bang, was not a random event. It was a deliberate, highly organized, creative act by the Almighty Creator.

Is Genesis 1:1,2 Part of the First Creative Day Narrative?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). This very brief summation is prior the start of the six creative days relative to the earth that start in **Genesis 1:3**. It shows that the universe, including the stars and our sun and moon, were already in existence before the first creative day. The specific reference to the sun, moon, and stars on the 4th creative day (**Genesis 1:16**) doesn't mean they weren't created prior to the 4th day, but that their discs could not be seen from the surface of the earth until then. It took that long for the earth's atmosphere to clear up enough to allow their discs to be seen from earth's surface. The earth orbits around the sun and is gravitational bound to it, so the sun had to exist prior to the earth. The earth, in its formative state, was already in existence prior to the first creative day:

“The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2 NRSV). Even though everything about the earth wasn't yet exactly like its eventual form, the earth was already in existence prior to the start of the six creative days. Using figurative language to describe the process, **Zechariah 12:1** says, **“Yahweh . . . hammered into shape the earth” (NJB)**. During this long period of time prior to the first creative day, the earth was in **“darkness.”** The sun's light did not reach the surface of the earth, likely because of dense cloud cover.

The fact that **Genesis 1:1,2** is a prologue to what follows is clearly seen by the introductory words to each of the six creative days: **“And God said,”** or **“Then God said” (Genesis**

1:3,6,14,20,24). YEC asserts that what is described in [Genesis 1:1,2](#) is part of the events of the first creative day (**Genesis 1:3-5**). The fact that [Genesis 1:1](#) does not have the introductory words, “And God said,” or, “Then God said,” is evidence it describing events prior to the start of the first creative day.

Are the Six Creative Days Each 24 Hours Long?

“These are the geneses of the heavens and the earth when they were created,-in the day [“yom”] when Yahweh God made earth and heaven”—[Genesis 2:4](#) Emphasized Bible

In [Genesis 2:4](#), **“In the day [“yom”] that the LORD God made the heavens and the earth” (NRSV)**, the Hebrew word for **“day”**, **“yom”**, is used, and it represents, or summarizes, the entire six creative days relative to the earth. So obviously **“yom”**, or **“day”**, represents a much longer time period than just 24 hours. The point here is that, even though **“yom”** in the Bible often means 24 hour time periods, it can also mean indefinitely long time periods, or even time periods shorter than 24 hours. **“Yom”** is used in a very interesting way to describe something else on the first creative day:

“God called the light ‘day’ [“yom”] and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening and there was morning-the first day” ([Genesis 1:5 NIV](#)). Here in [Genesis 1:5](#), describing the first creative **“day”** relative to the earth, when the earth’s surface was no longer in darkness, but light began to penetrate the thick clouds, mists, etc., enshrouding the earth, it is very obvious that **“day”** cannot be a 24 hour period. Why? Because, if the word **“day”** in the Bible always means a 24 hour period and the six creative days relative to the earth were 24 hours each, this 24 hour **“day”** is further subdivided into two parts, **“day”** and **“night”**, making **“day”** less than 24 hours, in this case. However, the context here shows that **“yom,”** or **“day,”** is something other than a simply a 24 hour time period. Let’s look at other examples of how **“yom”** is used in the Bible for periods of time other than 24 hours:

“Now in the days [“yom”] of the wheat harvest” (Genesis 30:14 NASB). “The wheat harvest” lasts for weeks, yet that period of time is referred to by **“yom,”** which, in this case, is obviously longer than 24 hours.

“You lived in the wilderness a long time [“yom”]” (Joshua 24:7 NIV). **“Yom,”** in this case, represents a 40 year period of time.

“In the day [“yom”] of harvest” (Proverbs 25:13 NIV). This verse gives further evidence that **“yom,”** the Hebrew word for day, day can be longer than 24 hours, in this case a period of many days or weeks, during which time crops would be harvested.

“On that day [“yom”] there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness. It will be a unique day[“yom”] -a day known only to the LORD-with no distinction between day [“yom”] and night. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day [“day”] living water will flow from Jerusalem, half of it to the east to the Dead Sea and half of it to the west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day [“yom”] there will be one LORD, and his name the only name” (Zechariah 14:6-9 NIV). In these verses **“day,”** or **“yom,”** is used five times. Four of these uses of **“day”** represent a yet future very long period of time, when **“the LORD will be king over the whole earth.”** In one of these uses of **“day”, “day”** represents light. In none of them does **“day”** mean a 24 hour day.

In view of all that God accomplished during **Genesis 1:1,2,** there is no reason to insist that this was not prior to the start of the six creative days regarding the earth. Additionally, in view of what God did during the six creative days in **Genesis 1:3-31,** there is no valid reason to insist that these days of creation are limited to 24 hours each! **Genesis 1:1** presents the picture that universe had a beginning and its creation has already been accomplished by God. **Genesis 1:2** informs us that the earth had existed in a transitional, formless, empty state, prior to the start of the first creative day regarding the earth.

Does the Expression 'Evening and Morning' Mean a 24 Hour Day?

The first six creative days are each individually summarized as, **“and there was evening and there was morning” (Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31)**. This expression is unique, only being used in **Genesis 1**. It seems to indicate that, at the start of each creative day (“evening”), things weren’t clear as to what God would create on that day, but after God had finished his work on that day, it was clearly obvious (“morning”) what God had created. The expression, ‘morning and evening,’ used in **Genesis 1** is figurative, not literal. Other scriptures also use ‘evening and morning’ in a figurative way. For example, **“His anger lasts but a moment, his favor for a lifetime. At dusk weeping comes for the night, but at dawn there is rejoicing” (Psalm 30:6 NAB [30:5])**.

The ancient Hebrews generally marked their 24 hour days with an expression like **“from the evening of the ninth day of month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath” (Leviticus 24:32 NIV)**. Their 24 hour days ran from ‘evening to evening,’ not from ‘evening to morning.’ Thus, the expression in **Genesis 1**, **“there was evening and there was morning,”** is very strong evidence that these creative days were not 24 hours long.

The fact that light began to reach the earth on Day 1, and the statement that “there was evening and there was morning,” which is also translated as **“The twilight and the dawn were day one” (Genesis 1:5 ISV)**, present a serious problem for YEC, which asserts that the sun wasn’t even created until Day 4. Why? Because there could be no “twilight” and “dawn” on earth without the sun being in existence.

How Long Were the Creative Days?

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it

holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done”—Genesis 2:1-3 NIV

The expression **“and there was evening and there was morning”** is not used regarding the seventh day. This omission from the Genesis creation account is important, for there is no indication that the seventh day of God’s rest from creating has ended, not then, and not now.

“So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest’”—Psalm 95:11 NIV

This is an indication that God’s rest was continuing in the time of King David. **Hebrews 3:7-4:11** draws from **Psalm 95** in making the case that the seventh creative day of God’s Sabbath rest continues:

“For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: ‘On the seventh day God rested from all his works’ . . . There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their own works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest”—Hebrews 4:9-11 NIV

Since Christians are strongly urged to **“make every effort to enter that rest”**, God’s seventh creative day of rest must still be continuing until now, for the words of Hebrews to Christians still apply. This is very strong evidence that the seventh creative day of rest has been going on for at least **6-7,000** years. While, there is no indication that all seven creative days are of the exact same length of time, the Biblical evidence strongly indicates that each of the first six creative days must be periods of time that are least thousands of years long, at a minimum, because the **7th** creative day has been going on for over 6,000 years.

The Bible does not tell us how long the creative days were, but it does give us powerful evidence that they were not 24 hours long. In this case, we can use the scientific evidence

that they likely were each at least several thousands of years long.