

Lesson 1: Creation

(Genesis 1)

When we open the Bible to the book of Genesis, the first words that we read are “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth,” (Genesis 1:1). God was not alone when He created the heaven and the earth. Jesus (John 1:1-3) and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26) were also present with Him during this event. While there are many things that we can learn from the first chapter of Genesis, the sole purpose of this lesson is to examine how the word “day” is used in the account of creation. It is important that we take the time to study this concept because there are brethren within the Lord’s church today who continue to spread false doctrine about how this word is used.

The word “day” is used both literally and figuratively throughout the Scriptures. In order to identify which meaning is used, it is necessary to consider the context first. After this has been accomplished, it is possible to know what the word “day” is referring to in a particular passage. Before we examine a few examples of the word “day,” the following table illustrates how some words and phrases are used differently in various passages.

Table 1.1

PHRASE	VERSE	USAGE
"gift of God"	John 4:10	Christ
"gift of God"	Acts 8:20	Power of the Holy Ghost
"gift of the Holy Ghost"	Acts 2:38	Christ
"gift of the Holy Ghost"	Acts 10:45	Power of the Holy Ghost

The Word “Day” Used In the Literal Sense

Whenever the word “day” is used in the literal sense it always refers to an actual day, regardless if the person speaking is describing or mentioning the day itself. For example, in John 11:9, we read, “Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” Here, Jesus is describing the day.

In Genesis 8:13, Moses indicates which day of the month the flood ceased. The scripture says, “And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.”

The day on which Christ rose from the dead is also a literal day. “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus,” (Luke 24:1-3).

The Word “Day” Used In the Figurative Sense

The word “day” is also used in the figurative sense. For example, in 2 Peter 3:8, Peter says, “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” In this passage, Peter is instructing us that God does not count time like we do.

Another passage where “day” is used in the figurative sense is found in Psalm 59:16. David says, “But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.” In this verse, David is saying that God has always been there beside him during his days or moments or times of “trouble”.

Christ used the word “day” figuratively as well as literally when He prophesied His second coming. Matthew 24:36 says, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Also, 2 Pet 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,” (2 Peter 3:10). In the figurative sense, “day” in this passage refers to the moment or time of His second appearance. In the literal sense, Christ’s second coming will come on a “day” that no one knows.

The Days of Creation Are Literal

Now that we have learned how “day” is used in various passages, let us examine its use in the first chapter of Genesis. The following table compares the days of creation with another passage which also contains a listing of days:

Table 1.2

Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31	Acts 20:15
<p>“And the evening and the morning were the first day. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And the evening and the morning were the third day. And the evening and the morning with the fourth day. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”</p>	<p>“And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.”</p>

There are several important clues in the word of God that help us to understand that the days of creation are literal twenty-four hour days. However, the most compelling evidence is found in Exodus 20:10-11. The children of Israel were commanded by God to keep the Sabbath, which was the seventh day, holy. The Scripture says, “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: 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.” Israel understood the meaning of the word day when they were reminded of His creating the heaven and the earth in six days. We are also forced to conclude that they knew how to count time; otherwise, they would not be able to keep the Sabbath and other important feast and holy days and other time requirements in the Law of Moses.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the word “day” is used literally and figuratively throughout the Scriptures. Furthermore, there is ample evidence in the Scriptures that proves the days of creation are literal twenty-four hour days.

Questions for Discussion:

1. When did God create the “heaven and the earth?” _____

2. Was God alone during this event? Explain. _____

3. How is the word “day” used in Genesis one? _____

4. List several passages that use “day” in the literal sense. _____

5. List several passages that use “day” in the figurative sense. _____

6. Compare and contrast the two passages in Table 1.2. _____

Lesson Extension:

Extend this lesson by discussing the other important elements of creation such as the meaning of Hebrews 11:1-3 and how this passage relates to Genesis chapter one. Another important element that should be talked about is what happened during each day.