

The Number of Days Taken to Create the Universe

The allegation is as follows:

Six or eight days of creation? Sura 7:54, 10:3, 11:7, and 25:59 clearly state that God created "the heavens and the earth" in six days. But in 41:9-12 the detailed description of the creation procedure adds up to eight days. This one will require some more detail in the analysis and explanation.

The Qur'an clearly mentions that creation took place in six days: 7:54 Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days... Now let us examine the verses 41:9-12: 41:9. Say: "Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days and you set up rivals (in worship) with Him? That is the Lord of the Universe.

41:10. He set on the (earth), mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings upon it, and measured therein its sustenance within four Days, for all those who ask (about its creation).

41:11. Thumma(Moreover/then), He turned towards the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come, willingly."

41:12. So He completed them as seven firmaments in two Days, and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command. And We adorned the cosmic heaven with lights, and (provided it) with guard. Such is the Decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, Full of Knowledge.

There are various explanations that can be given here:

1. The first explanation is the classical and most common one, but we shall elaborate upon it in greater detail. The classic scholars of the Qur'an have mentioned that the four days mentioned in verse 41:10 includes the two days mentioned in verse 41:9. This was the explanation provided by Al-Qurtubi, Al-Zajjaaj and Al-Baghawi. Indeed this is a very logical approach because there is no indication that verse 41:10 describes a period subsequent to that described in verse 41:9. Verse 41:9 is in the form of a question, while 41:10 explains the point further. It is logical that the development of mountains, the bestowment of blessings, and the measure of sustenance would denote the full development of the earth, including its period of creation mentioned in 41:9. A similar example would be if one were to say, "I read the first chapter of that book in two days, and I finished the entire book in two weeks." Or if one were to say, "The teacher taught us the basics in two days, and we understood all the details within three weeks." Obviously, in both cases, the second period of time can be taken to include the first period of time. One objection that is raised to this explanation is that the second stage described in 41:10 presupposes the existence of the earth and therefore does not include its creation. Is this true? The indication of time in 41:10 is given by saying "fee four days". When fee is translated as within, then this period can clearly include the previous period describing the creation of the earth. As illustrated by the second example provided, understanding the details of a subject does entail understanding the basics, but this does not mean that the basics cannot be included in the second period of time if the preposition 'within' is used. So if it is said that we understood the basics in two days, and we understood the details within three weeks, even though the details requires the basics, the second period of time still includes the first period. Moreover, the period of time is connected to the measurement of sustenance, which does not need to occur after to the creation of the earth. Rather, it occurs during the earth's creation as well.

Another objection to this explanation is that it is scientifically inaccurate to say that the earth was formed before the heavens. This objection interprets the heavens in this verse to refer to outerspace, and claims that it is inaccurate to say that it was only 'smoke' even after the earth was created. But these critics do not realize that the heaven in this passage refers to the atmosphere of the earth, as is indicated by the mentioning of the seven layers, and each with its own property or command (this description is explained [here](#)). The term used for heaven in the Qur'an is As-Samaa. This basically denotes whatever is above or beyond the earth. Depending on the context of the verse, it can be taken to mean atmosphere of outerspace. In these verses, only after mentioning the atmosphere does verse 41:12 mention As-Samaa Ad-Dunyaa or what can be translated as the cosmic heaven. The cosmic heaven refers to outerspace while the heaven described in seven layers refers to the earth's atmosphere. So to answer this objection, any student of science knows that the atmosphere has developed greatly since the formation of the earth. The modern atmosphere is often referred to as the 'third atmosphere'. The first atmosphere that formed with the earth was very primitive and very different from our modern atmosphere. The original atmosphere consisted of mainly helium and hydrogen, and was soon dissipated by the heat of the earth. The second atmosphere was formed after volcanic activity and primarily consisted of carbon dioxide and water

vapor. There was some nitrogen but virtually no oxygen. So the development of the modern atmosphere was clearly after the creation of the earth, which is exactly as the verses state. Interestingly, the modern atmosphere also formed after the existence of early life and the abundance of rain, which Allah often describes as His blessings in the Qur'an. This is exactly as the Qur'an has stated in verses 41:9-12. The above explanation is evidently the best and most logical. Nevertheless, we shall quote some other explanations given by Muslims to allow the reader some choice in selecting the best refutation to this allegation.

2. The word *yawm*, which has been translated as day can also mean period. It has been explained thoroughly by Moiz Amjad in his article entitled [The Length of God's Days](#). If we understand *yawm* as period, there can be no contradiction because the same action can be measured in different periods of time. Here Allah is providing the details on the stages in the development of the earth and the rest of the universe. These verses demonstrate the design and wisdom in nature, and the bounties Allah has favoured us with. Therefore, Allah has chosen to mention the periods separately in more detail.

3. The third explanation does not say that the second period includes the first, but instead argues that the last period (mentioned in 41:11-12) of two days, occurs simultaneously in relation to the first two periods. Therefore, the earth was created in two days simultaneously with the creation of the heaven, then the mountains and blessings were added in four days, adding to a total of six days. This explanation translates *thumma* as moreover instead of then. In other words, the period described in 4:11 is not subsequent to the previous verses, but rather it occurs parallel to the creation of the earth in 4:9. The meaning of *Thumma* is explained very well by Moiz Amjad in his article entitled [The Meaning of "Thumma" & "Yawm"](#). Critics argue that when it says God turned towards the heaven, this implies a sequential act. But this is not entirely true, as God could have turned to the heaven at any point in the past, not necessarily after the creation of the heavens.

4. A similar explanation to the above is that the two days taken to create the heavens are not to be added to the previous days. This argument does not debate the meaning of *thumma* but instead argues that nowhere in the passage does God mention the creation of the heavens. It only mentions the further development of the heavens. So this can either be taken to refer to the atmosphere or outerspace, as both are compatible with this description. In other words, the earth was created as described in 41:9-10, and the creation of the heaven is not mentioned at all in this passage. The passage only mentions the further perfection and development of the heavens, indicating that they were created while the process described in 41:9-10 was going on. This explanation is also sufficient to explain the allegation.

Before finishing with this allegation, there is still another issue to comment on. Some people have inquired about a hadith found in Sahih Muslim that describes the order of creation. Concerning this hadith, it is sufficient to quote a fatwa from IslamToday.com: As for the hadith in Muslim, it reads: Allah created the dust on Saturday. He created the mountains on Sunday. He created the trees on Monday. He created the despised things on Tuesday. He created the light on Wednesday. He scattered the beasts throughout it on Thursday. He created Adam (peace be upon him) in the late afternoon on Friday as the last creation on the last hour of Friday, between the late afternoon and the night. There are numerous criticisms against it.

Al-Bukhârî writes in *al-Târâkh al-Kabîr*: "Some of them have said that it is from Abû Hurayrah who took it from Ka`b al-Ahbâr. This is the most correct view." Ibn Kathîr, in his commentary of the Qur'an writes: "This hadith is one of the unusual hadith found in Sahih Muslim. `Alî al-Madîni, al-Bukhârî, and a number of other leading scholars of hadith have criticized it, saying that it is the statement of Ka`b and that Abû Hurayrah merely heard it from Ka`b al-Ahbar and some narrators merely got confused and attributed it to the Prophet (peace be upon him). This has been thoroughly researched by al-Bayhaqî. Ibn Taymiyah comments: "It is a defective hadith. It has been declared defective by more than a few scholars." [Majmû` al-Fatâwâ (17/236)] Moreover, regarding the text itself, al-Qurtubî points out in his commentary on Sahih Muslim that the text does not convey its meaning with sufficient coherence. He writes in *al-Mufhim*: "This hadith has been related in other sources besides Sahih Muslim with various conflicting narrations. In some of them the Earth is created on Sunday and Monday while the mountains are created on Tuesday and the trees, rivers, and inhabitants are created on Wednesday, and the Sun, Moon, stars, and angels created on Thursday, and Adam on Friday. These are single-narrator hadith that conflict with one another and do not provide any practical instruction. We must not rely upon them in determining the order of appearance of created things during those days. What he is saying is that even if

we regard the hadith as authentic – as a number of scholars do – there remains the problem that there is too much incoherence in its many conflicting narrations to provide evidence for the order of events.

And Allah knows best.

Fatwâ Department Research Committee of IslamToday chaired by Sheikh `Abd al-Wahhâb al-Turayrî The above fatwa clarifies that the narration is not only defective but that it contains other points which are inconsistent with similar narrations. As far as the text of the narration itself is concerned, since we know that the arabic term yawm can refer to either a day or a period of time, then the only point in the narration which would appear to conflict with science is the saying that light was created on the fourth day. Concerning this part of the narration, it is interesting to read the commentary of Sahih Muslim written by Imaam Abu Zakariyya An-Nawawi (d. 1300CE): The Messenger's Saying (peace be upon him): "And He created light (ar. Noor) on the fourth day"

This is how it has been narrated in Sahih Muslim as noor but in the transmission of Thabit ibn Qasim it says noon with the letter 'Nûn' at the end. Al-Qaadi said "It refers to the fish". (Saheeh Muslim Bi-Sharh An-Nawawi, 4997) This seems to suggest the creation of aquatic life before that of humans.

The above discussion should clear any confusion regarding the account of creation in the Qur'an and in the hadith.