
Creation Answers

Creation Education Materials, P.O. Box 153402, Irving, TX 75015-3402

Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer of Creation Education Materials on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and contributed to radio programs for the Institute for Creation Research.

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is the best way to view the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to Wayne at wayne@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

I apologize for this newsletter being late. On the weekend of March 20th an internet virus known as the "Witty Worm" attacked many network servers of corporations, web hosting companies, and others. This worm virus would not affect many home users. (Users of BlackIce antivirus/firewall software could be vulnerable to the Witty Worm virus.) This virus is a particularly dangerous one as it corrupts data on the hard drive of the computer it infects. Thus it can cause a computer to not be able to reboot and it can cause the loss of other types of data, such as corrupting web site files. This unfortunately happened at C.I. Host, which is the company who hosts the creationanswers.net web site. My business web site, goodcomputing.biz, was also affected. My goodcomputing.biz site was down for about four days but creationanswers.net was down for a full week, including my e-mail.

Another development in my life is that I was recently hired for a short one week contract job, after being unemployed for just over a year. I worked for Citadel Security Software as a software tester. Citadel makes software that automates the protection of networks from intrusions, hack attacks, and viruses. Computer and network security is now an issue I am even more concerned about. C. I. Host is a company with good network resources but they were still brought down by the Witty Worm.

Note that I have a new ministry address, which is P.O. Box 153402, Irving, TX, 75015-3402.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

The First Two Verses - Genesis 1:1-2

Gap Theories and the Age of the Earth

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Genesis 1:1-2, NIV

There has been great controversy among Christians and some scientists regarding the first two verses of the Bible. There are a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1 that suggest there is a gap of time between verses 1 and 2 that is not explicitly mentioned. This general idea is known as the Gap Theory, though there is not just one "Gap Theory" but a number of similar theories. The primary motivation for putting forward this view both historically and today is to provide a means to view Genesis that allows for the Earth (and the universe) to be very old. There are also some who argue for a gap between 1:1 and 1:2 for theological reasons.

The first individual to teach about the idea of a gap between 1:1 and 1:2 was apparently a Scottish theologian named Thomas Chalmers (1780 - 1847). There were many authors who wrote about gap theories in the 1800's, most notably G. H. Pember. Arthur C. Custance is also known for his book, *Without Form and Void*, published in 1970. It is important to note that the Gap Theory (or theories) were not put forward until after geologists began to say the Earth was very old in the 1800's. Geologists were setting aside the concept of a global worldwide Flood and explaining rocks and fossils in terms of slow effects over long periods of time. The fossil

evidence was being explained by geologists in the context of biological evolution. Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859, which was after geologists had begun to reject the historicity of a Biblical chronology that made the Earth only thousands of years in age. Gap Theories became widely known partly through the Scofield Reference Bible (1909) and Dake's Annotated Reference Bible (1961). Both of these Bibles have been widely used among Christians.

Gap Theories have certain common aspects, as well as variations on some details. Among the ideas common to Gap Theories are 1) that the days of creation in Genesis 1 are literal 24-hour days, 2) belief in a very old age for Earth (though often not specified), 3) belief that much of Earth's rock strata and fossils formed in a time gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, 4) belief that there was life on Earth prior to the week of Genesis 1 that was judged by God in a judgement associated with Satan being thrown out of heaven to the Earth. Some "Gap Theory"-like views accept biological evolution and some do not. Some may accept the biological evolution of any life except mankind. Those holding to a Gap Theory usually do not take Noah's Flood to be worldwide, but see it as local in scope.

For instance, one view known as the Recreation view argues for an ancient world prior to Genesis 1 that was judged and left totally without life when Satan was thrown out of heaven. This view says that Satan's fall to Earth was prior to the creation week of Genesis 1. Then after some unknown amount of time, God recreated the Earth and life on it in six literal days. This is generally the same as the Gap Theory except that in the Recreation view, very little is said about geology and biological evolution. Individuals with this view do not necessarily try to harmonize Genesis with science and they may not accept evolution, they just seem to avoid the scientific implications. Their arguments for this view center around their theology of Lucifer/Satan.

The Text of Genesis

There are several issues about specific terms in Genesis that frequently come up in debating the Gap Theory. First of these is the word translated “was” in verse 2. This term is indeed sometimes translated “became.” But the question is, in the context of Genesis 1, could it be translated “became?” Richard Niessen, in his article “Is the Gap Theory a Biblical Option?” points out that in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) 258 out of 264 occurrences of this word are translated was. (Niessen’s article can be downloaded from the download page on creationanswers.net.)

Some other passages with similar grammar include Jonah 3:3, Exodus 1:5, and Judges 9:51. In all these cases, using the word became does not make sense. Also, according to Niessen, if a change of condition were intended, in Hebrew there would be a prefix, “le” which would be translated as “into” in English. This prefix is missing in Genesis 1:2. What this means is that the Hebrew implies Earth had not been in some other condition and then changed into being “without form and void.” Earth was initially created “without form and void.” This was before it was completed. Furthermore, if “was” should really be “became” in Genesis 1:2, then a number of other passages have to be changed also to agree with it! This would include Genesis 2:2 (create would become recreate) and Exodus 20:11 (made would become remade), for example. Reinterpreting this Hebrew word as “became” has drawn significant criticism from Bible scholars, even from some who do not take Genesis 1 literally.

A second issue related to the terms in these verses is the “waw” in Hebrew that is translated as “and” or sometimes “now” at the beginning of the sentence of verse 2. Thus the NIV has this verse as “Now the earth was” The issue here is how are verses 1 and 2 to be connected or related to each other, from the grammar and use of

the “waw.” The sources I have indicates that the “waw” means there is a direct chronological relationship between the events that are described. So, everything in 1:1-5, or at least 2-5, took place on the very first day of existence. Verse 1 could possibly be a summary statement about the creation week. But an implied gap of time between verses 1 and 2 does not seem to be possible.

A third issue from the first two verses is regarding the Hebrew terms that can be translated as “make,” “made,” “create,” etc. There are three such terms in Hebrew that are used in Genesis. These can be transliterated into English as “bara,” “asah,” and “yatzar.” Exodus 20:11 is very explicit that everything in the heavens, the Earth, and the sea were all created in six days. Apparently, in order to deal with Exodus 20:11 without contradicting Genesis 1, Gap Theorists say that the term “bara” is always used to refer to God creating something that had no prior existence but that “asah” refers to God forming prior existing materials into something new. Exodus 20:11 uses “asah” but both “asah” and “bara” are used in Genesis 1.

There does not seem to be a distinction in the meaning of these two words, at least in the creation account. They are used synonymously. For example in Genesis 1:21 it uses bara regarding God creating the great sea creatures but it uses asah in 1:25 to refer to God making the beasts of the Earth. Genesis 1:26 and 1:27 both refer to God making or creating man but 26 uses asah and 27 uses bara. In Isaiah 41:20 bara and asah are found used in synonymous parallelism. Other passages could be cited as well. It is therefore valid to take asah and bara as synonymous in Genesis 1. They do not support the Gap concept because Exodus 20:11 has an explicit reference to God creating everything in six days, supporting a literal view of Genesis 1.

A fourth issue regarding the terms in Genesis 1:1-2 has to do with the words

rendered “formless and void”, or “formless and empty” by modern translations. In Hebrew, these terms are transliterated “tohu vabohu.” Isaiah 34:11 and Jeremiah 4:23 speak of tohu and bohu as resulting from God’s judgement of sin. Gap Theorists argue that because that is how these terms are used in Isaiah and Jeremiah, that Genesis 1:2 should be taken as a result of a judgement also. It is also argued that God would not create the Earth “formless and void,” so it must have become that way as a result of judgement. But, in Genesis 1:2 there is no mention of judgement and even if it were, it does not indicate who is being judged. All of that is read into the text by the assumption of the gap and God judging the first Earth (sometimes called the Pre-Adamite world).

The context of Genesis 1 is quite different from Isaiah 34 and Jeremiah 4. Doesn’t God have the right to create the Earth in stages over a period of days if he wants to? Is there something wrong with God making the Earth so it was uninhabitable, incomplete, and uninhabited on the first day? The Earth was completed in a logical fashion in the first three days of the creation week and then it was filled with living creatures and humans during the fifth and sixth days. Just as a potter starts with an “unformed” lump of clay, God started with the Earth incomplete and unformed. There was no hint of judgement or evil in how God created.

Satan in the Gap

The Gap Theory proposes that long before the creation week described in Genesis 1, there was another Earth that was populated with the various prehistoric animals that we find in fossils. Some would say that there were prehistoric hominids (partly ape, partly men) and humans as well. On this point there is some variety of opinion. Some would say that there were “soul-less men” that had no eternal soul. This world that would have existed long ago but was destroyed is often called the Pre-

Adamite world because it was long before Adam was created. For some reason, there is no description of this Pre-Adamite world in the Bible. However, it is said that Genesis 1:1 refers to this prior world. Gap Theorists then say that sometime in the long period between verses 1 and 2, Lucifer (now called Satan) rebelled against God and was expelled from heaven, taking some of the angels with him, who became known as demons. Somehow the Earth was judged when Satan was thrown out of heaven and this left the Earth covered with water as well as “formless and empty” as verse 2 says. This meant that ALL life on the first Earth was gone and there was much thick rock strata and an abundance of fossils left from organisms that perished in the judgement against Satan. This judgement is sometimes called “Lucifer’s flood.”

Note that Christian scholars have no consensus on when the fall of Satan took place, so having Satan’s fall prior to the creation week is not the only possibility. By this scenario, Satan would have been on the Earth before any of the events of the creation week in Genesis 1. Gap Theorists argue for this entire scenario regarding Satan’s fall using Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:1-16, and Revelation 12:7-9. At the end of the time gap, God recreates or reconstructs the Earth and the life on it in six literal days. Thus the Gap Theory is sometimes called the “ruin-reconstruction” theory.

There are several logical problems with the entire scenario above. First of all, how could God say his creation was all “very good” in Genesis 1:31 if under the topsoil of the Garden of Eden were the fossilized remains of many organisms that were buried in the prior cataclysm? Secondly, why would Earth have been judged for Satan’s sin when Satan’s rebellion took place in heaven? There is no indication in the Bible that Satan’s fall had any kind of physical effects on Earth. Obviously we don’t know much about how Satan’s fall took place. But the whole idea of “Lucifer’s flood” is very questionable. Thirdly, the material making

up the Earth, and possibly material making up stars and galaxies, rather than being created from nothing in the creation week, was merely reformed and reorganized into our present Earth and universe. This is contrary to the creation account and contrary to Exodus 20:11.

Considering Earth's geology also leads to difficulties with the Gap Theory. The Gap Theory is supposed to allow for the geological evidence for an old Earth and allow for evolution to occur in the gap period (though some would disagree with this aspect). But if there was a judgement so severe as Lucifer's flood, it would surely and quickly wipe out all evidence for the long geologic ages prior to Genesis 1. It would have been even more severe a judgement than Noah's Flood! We have about three full chapters in Genesis on Noah's Flood, but no description of Lucifer's flood (or whatever this early judgement was).

Also, if Lucifer's flood was so severe, then what was Noah's Flood? Genesis chapters 6-8 are extremely explicit over and over about Noah's Flood being a global Flood. Yet, if Noah's Flood was global, it would destroy evidence of Lucifer's flood and the Pre-Adamite world. And if Lucifer's flood explains the rocks and fossils, there's not much left for Noah's Flood to explain. Or, perhaps we should see evidence of two global floods in the rock record! This is all too hard to accept. This is why most Gap Theorists see Noah's Flood as a local or regional event, not a global one. Though many have tried to use the Gap Theory to accommodate modern historical geology, it would not really satisfy a geologist anyway. Modern Geology would not accept any global flood, whether Lucifer's or Noah's. Also, evolution is believed to tie all life together over long ages of time, from the first single-celled life form to man.

The Gap Theory, depending on how deals with human beings in the first Earth, could also seriously undermine the basis for Jesus Christ's death. If there were a race of "Pre-Adamite men" then were they judged

for Satan's sin? Also, the judgement of this prior race would mean there was human death before Adam's sin.

This contradicts I Corinthians 15 and Genesis 3 about how physical death and sin relate. There cannot be human physical death prior to the sin of Adam and Eve. As to whether there may have been death of animals prior to sin, that is not clear from Scripture. But sin clearly affected the living world, and apparently even the universe as a whole. Physical death did not come about in the human race because of the competition and death of animals as evolution says. Furthermore, animals did not begin to kill each other to eat until after the sin of Adam and Eve. Adam was the first man according to I Corinthians 15:45, and the origin of the first man has no connection with the origin of other living things. If the Gap Theory were true much of the logic in I Corinthians 15 would make no sense about the basis for Christ's death and resurrection.

It is important not to allow ideas from science to determine how we interpret Scripture. Many Christians who hold to a high view of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture inadvertently allow their view of the Bible's authority to slip when it comes to the early chapters of Genesis. I cannot believe that the Hebrews of Moses' time would have ever thought of the Gap Theory or anything like it. If they would not have understood Genesis 1 this way, then how can we? We all need to evaluate what we hear in the light of all that Scripture says. I think we can take Genesis chapter one as a straightforward record of the events of creation. If that conflicts with evolutionary science, so be it.

Ossuary Update - Inscription is looking more authentic

An article in the recent March/April issue of Biblical Archeology Review (BAR Vol. 30, No. 2, 2004) gives new information on the James Ossuary. The Ossuary is a

limestone box used to store human bones. This was discussed in Vol. 4, Issue 1 of *Creation Answers* (Jan. 2003). One such box has generated significant media attention because of the Aramaic inscription on it, which says "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in the summer of 2003 declared that this inscription was undoubtedly a forgery. New information from the scientific analysis of the inscription does not support the IAA's conclusion.

The inscription was tested by IAA geologists by taking small samples of the material in the inscription. The goal was to analyze the composition of the patina, the surface layer covering the box. Over time, oxidation from exposure tends to cause a slight discoloration of the surface of the limestone. By measuring the concentrations of oxygen and carbon isotopes, geologists hope to be able to pin down both the age of the inscription and the general location of where the limestone may have come from. The IAA questioned the inscription because their oxygen radioactive isotope data from six of their seven samples seemed to point to the inscription being much younger than from the first century. Thus the IAA announcement said it was a forgery and not from Jesus' brother James. After the IAA announcement, a number of scholars criticized the IAA's conclusion. Some have suggested that if the ossuary were washed, for instance, it could throw off the oxygen isotope data and would suggest that the Ossuary was authentic. Other scholars argued from details about the inscription that it was authentic.

It has now come to light that the seventh sample taken by the IAA did not follow the pattern of the other six. The oxygen isotope ratio for the seventh sample was taken from the word "Jesus" in the inscription. This seventh sample had oxygen isotope numbers that matched the rest of the limestone in the ossuary. This suggests the inscription is from the first century. One of the IAA geologists has

argued that he may have accidentally mixed some of the box limestone with the surface coating when he collected the sample. According to the current article in *BAR*, it seems unlikely that sloppy collection of the sample would throw off the result this much.

In addition, there is new evidence from carbon isotope data that seems to point to the inscription being authentic. Tests have also been done of the carbon-13 and carbon-12 isotopes from the samples. These tests compare the carbon isotope ratios from the inscription to the ratios from other parts of the ossuary. The two sets of ratios are virtually identical. The original IAA report did not mention its carbon isotope results, apparently because they didn't fit their conclusion! All this points to the ossuary being of the right age to be from about the time when James the brother of Jesus died. There is likely to be other studies of the ossuary. There are times when we should wait for stronger evidence before we come to our own conclusions. This new information is making me more confident that the James Ossuary is authentic. It seems to be a remarkable confirmation of the historicity of the New Testament.

"Creation College" conference coming in July 2004, from AIG.

July 21-25, 2004 in West Harrison, Indiana the Answers in Genesis organization is sponsoring an exciting conference. This conference has a number of excellent creationist speakers and is intended for pastors, youth leaders, teachers, home schooling parents, and others who teach about creation. You can find out more about the conference from the AIG web site:

<http://www.answersingenesis.org>

This conference is one of the best I know of for learning about creation, evolution, and becoming equipped to teach others. I would heartily recommend it. There are about 9 speakers who have varied backgrounds.