

GAP ANALYSIS

* * * WHY THERE IS NO GAP BETWEEN GENESIS 1:1 & 1:2 * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (**Genesis 1:2**)

The Gap Theory. The so-called Gap Theory posits the existence of a gap of time, of indeterminate length (but perhaps millions or billions of years), between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. In this view, Genesis 1:1 describes the original creation of "the heaven and the earth" (i.e., the universe), including the host of angelic creatures. In time, Lucifer led many¹ of these angelic creatures in a rebellion against God, which God judged in a destruction of the original creation by means of a universal flood. Thus, the description of creation as "without form, and void" found in Genesis 1:2 is the result of this divine, primeval judgment. Genesis 1:3 begins the record of a new, 6-day creation (i.e., re-creation) that results in our present universe.

The Gap Theory as held by most proponents today is often unfairly maligned. It is not a back-door attempt to import billions of years into the Genesis 1 account of creation for the purpose of accommodating human evolution; only angelic (not human) creatures populated the original creation². It accepts the literal, 6-day creation of the present universe, approximately six thousand years ago. However, while perhaps not an heretical view of primeval history, the Gap Theory is an erroneous, unbiblical view. In the sections that follow, the Gap Theory is analyzed, first refuting the passages of Scripture most often used to support it, then presenting Biblical arguments against it.

Analysis of the Case for a Gap. Four principal passages of Scripture are used in support of the Gap Theory: 1) Isaiah 45:18, 2) Jeremiah 4:23-27, 3) Genesis 1:28, and 4) Job 38:4-7. Each of these passages will be analyzed in turn.

Isaiah 45:18 reads, "For thus saith the LORD who created the heavens, God himself who formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I *am* the LORD, and *there is none else*". Gap Theory proponents argue that God's stated purpose in creating the earth in Genesis 1:1 was for it "to be inhabited", and that for it to be found "void" in Genesis 1:2 is inconsistent with that purpose. This seems to be a weak argument on its face. Genesis 1 records God's work of creation as a progressive process performed over six days, only at the end of which was it "finished" (Gen2:1) in fulfillment of His intended purpose.

¹ It is generally understood from Revelation 12:4 that one-third of the angelic host rebelled along with Lucifer, whereas two-thirds remained faithful to JEHOVAH.

² Some 19th century proponents (e.g., G. H. Pember) of the Gap Theory postulated the original earth hosted a pre-Adamite human race along with animals (i.e., dinosaurs), but contemporary advocates do not.

Jeremiah 4 is a call for the nation of Judah, and especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to repent and return to worship and follow JEHOVAH. Looking into the prophetic future, the prophet sees the coming judgment upon Judah in its invasion and conquest by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. In this context of judgment, Jeremiah 4:23 records, "I beheld the earth and, lo, it was without form, and void". Gap Theory proponents see in this passage a necessary linkage between the earth existing in a condition described as "without form, and void" and divine judgment; thus, Genesis 1:2 must have resulted from a divine judgment. However, such a linkage is not necessary but contrived. Jeremiah's description of the land³ of Judah being rendered "without form, and void" as a result of the Babylonian conquest simply means it was returned to the condition in which it existed before it was populated and cultivated by the Jews (i.e., the cities were no longer in existence, and men and beasts were driven out of the land). The expression describes a land (or earth) before the work of man's cultivation (or God's creation) was exercised upon it. With this understanding, there is no necessity that Genesis 1:2 implies a preceding divine judgment.

Genesis 1:28 records God's command to Adam and Eve to "replenish" the earth. Gap Theory proponents assert that the word "replenish" means *to refill*, necessarily implying that the earth was previously filled. Certainly, when this same command was given to Noah after the Flood (Gen9:1), "replenish" could mean *to refill*, since the world before the Flood was indeed previously filled with men. But must "replenish" mean *to refill*? Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) gives two definitions for "replenish". As a transitive⁴ verb, "replenish" means *to fill; to stock with numbers or abundance*. As an intransitive verb, "replenish" means *to recover former fullness*. In both Genesis 1:28 and 9:1, "replenish" is used as a transitive verb, taking "the earth" as a direct object. Thus, the natural meaning of "replenish" in these contexts is *to fill, not to refill*.

Finally, consider JEHOVAH's conversation with Job in Job 38:4-7. The context of the conversation is God's work of creation. God asks the question, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job38:4), then asserts that this was a time "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job38:7). Gap Theory proponents presume that God's work of "[laying] the foundations of the earth" refers to Genesis 1:1; and if the "morning stars" and "sons of God" (i.e., angelic creatures) were present at this time, their creation must have taken place before the six day re-creation that began in Genesis 1:3. But what does Scripture characterize as God's work of "[laying] the foundations of the earth"? Commenting on God's work of creation, Proverbs 8:29 notes, "When [JEHOVAH] gave to the sea its decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth⁵". This is an obvious case of Hebrew (synonymous) parallelism, such that God "[appointed] the foundations of the earth" when He set the boundaries of the waters/seas on the earth; but in the Genesis 1 account of creation, the appointment of boundaries between water and land occurs in Genesis 1:9 on the third day (Gen1:12). Thus, there is no necessity for the creation of the angels to have occurred in Genesis 1:1.

Arguments Against a Gap. There are clear and straightforward passages in Scripture that explicitly preclude a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

³ The Hebrew word (*eretz*) translated "earth" is also translated "land", depending upon context. In Jeremiah 4:23 the context is the "land" of Judah, not the "earth" as in Genesis 1:2.

⁴ A transitive verb takes a direct object, and intransitive verb does not.

⁵ This is an instance where the Hebrew word (*eretz*) is more naturally understood to mean "land" rather than earth.

Consider Genesis 2:1-4. This passage teaches that "the heavens and the earth" (i.e., directly linking to Genesis 1:1) were "finished" (Gen2:1) in a six day period, allowing God to rest "on the seventh day" (Gen2:2). This precludes the possibility of a gap of time (of indeterminate length) between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Included in the six days are both God's works of creation (*ex nihilo*) and making (Gen2:4), between which some Gap Theory proponents attempt to distinguish.

Consider Exodus 31:17. This verse asserts that "*in six days the LORD made heaven and earth*". Thus, Genesis 1:1 is explicitly included in the six days of creation.

Finally, consider Exodus 20:7-11. God performed His work of creation in six days, resting on the seventh, in order to establish a pattern of labor for man. Furthermore, "*in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...*" (Exod20:11). Not only were "heaven", "earth", and the "sea" made in the six days of creation, but so were those creatures that populated these domains. Those creatures that filled the "sea" were created on the fifth day (Gen1:20-21), those creatures that filled the "earth" were created on the sixth day (Gen1:24-27), and those creatures that filled "heaven" (i.e., the angelic host) were also necessarily created at some point⁶ during the six days.

Conclusions. The Gap Theory is not consistent with the revelation given in the Bible concerning God's work of creation. No gap of immense time occurred between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Genesis 1:2 describes an initial, and naturally unformed and unfilled, condition of the earth as part of God's process of creation that took six days to complete, not the result of a primeval judgment upon an angelic civilization alleged to have existed in the ancient past. Rather, Scripture clearly teaches that the heaven and earth (i.e., the universe) and all the creatures that populate them were created in a six day period.

⁶ The timing of the creation (and fall) of the angels is a separate, but related, issue; it is nowhere stated explicitly in Scripture. However, consider the following chain of inferences. Angels are called "morning stars" in Job 38:7, and Lucifer is called "son of the morning" in Isaiah 14:12, such that angels are strongly associated with the "morning". Furthermore, they are often denoted as "the angels of heaven" (cf. Matt24:36), since their natural abode is in heaven (Matt22:30). Thus, both "morning" and "heaven" must exist in order to allow for the creation of angels. During the creation week, "morning" is established on the first day (Gen1:5), and "heaven" is made on the second day (Gen1:8). If the angels were created during the "morning" (i.e., latter half) of the second day when "heaven" was made, it would be consistent with their corporate praise offered when the foundations of the earth were laid on the third day (Cp., Gen1:9; Job 38:4-7; Prov8:29).