

Is There A Gap Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2?

Paul Meacham, Jr.

Paul Meacham and his wife April, have 3 children. Paul is the speaker for radio and television for the Truth For The World program. He is also involved in meeting work and promotional/informational work for Truth for the World and does foreign evangelism in conjunction with Truth for the World.

Before I address my assigned topic, please allow me to express my sincerest thanks to the elders of the church at 39th Street. I have long admired these men and their oversight of the Lord's church in Independence, MO. I wish for them and their families all of God's richest blessings and offer to them my full support and deepest gratitude. I also extend to my friend, Jack Williams, my grateful thanks for this invitation. I know no man who better fulfills Paul's admonition to Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). I count myself blessed to be able to call him my friend and I pray that he may have many years of service in the kingdom yet ahead of him.

THE GAP THEORY DEFINED

I have been asked to address the question, "Is there a gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2?" I am grateful for this assignment and to avoid confusion, I believe it wise to begin with some definitions.

First, let us define a theory. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, a theory is "systematically organized knowledge applicable in a relatively wide variety of circumstances, especially **a system of assumptions, accepted principles**, and rules of procedure devised to analyze, predict, or otherwise explain the nature or behavior of a specified set of phenomena." A theory is further defined as "**abstract reasoning; speculation**" or "**an assumption based on limited information or knowledge; a conjecture**." (emp. PDM) It is because a theory is unproven "assumptions" "speculation" and "conjecture" that many insist on referring to "The Gap Theory" and other evolutionary theories as fact. We will not. As we consider this matter, let each of us fully realize that this is a theory and like other theories must be proven before it can be accepted.

Second, let us consider the "gap" in "The Gap Theory." This proposed gap is a vast and indefinite span of time that some theorize must exist between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. A formal definition of "The Gap Theory" is difficult, because its proponents almost always disagree with each other on many of its foundational tenets. However, for the purpose of this discussion, we will define The Gap Theory as the belief that:

1. Gen. 1:1 and Gen. 1:2 are actually separated by millions or billions of years.
2. During this time, Satan sinned and was cast down to the earth and as part of God's punishment the "original world" now embroiled in sin was brought to a state of ruin and waste.
3. God then re-created the world we now know in six days as the Bible records.

As we said, there are many variations of beliefs encompassed by the term “Gap Theory,” but most adherents will agree with most of the three tenets of our definition.

THE NEED FOR THE GAP THEORY

There is really only one reason for the Gap Theory to exist. Since many have rejected God’s Revelation regarding the beginning of all things temporal, an alternative must be presented. Some, whom the Bible labels as fools (Psalm 14:1, 53:1), have completely rejected the existence of God and the validity of His Word. They present theories that completely discount the working of an Almighty Creator and arrogantly mock any who believe in Jehovah.

Others try desperately to bow one knee to the God of heaven and the other to the idol of “science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20). In doing so, they serve neither well as “A double -minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). It is their attempt to reconcile the Bible to the errors of scientists that has brought about The Gap Theory and other theories usually grouped under the banner of Theistic Evolution.

If one simply reads the Bible, honestly considers the evidence that proves it is the work of God, and believes what God has therein revealed, no need for The Gap Theory exists.

THE GAP THEORY OR THE BIBLE

Since the proponents of the Gap Theory usually turn to “scientific” discoveries to show that vast amounts of time had to have been involved in the beginning of the world, many have used true science to disprove this theory. However, I am not a scientist and am not qualified to offer my own scientific conclusions on this matter. As a student of the Bible, I will use the Bible to prove that it is not possible to accept the scriptures as God-given and also believe in the Gap Theory. If it can be shown that there is clear Bible teaching making it impossible for the Gap Theory to be true, that should be sufficient for any who believe the Bible to be the inerrant, inspired Word of God. We will show such by noticing three principles taught in three different places in the Bible. Any one of these would by itself be sufficient to disprove the Gap Theory, but we will briefly examine all three.

Exodus 20:8-11

The experienced Bible student will immediately recognize this text as part of the giving of the Ten Commandments by the prophet Moses. The verses in question comprise the fourth of those Ten Commandments, which is generally remembered by the words of verse 8 where God said, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In verses 9-10, Jehovah continues by telling Israel how the Sabbath was to be remembered and what actions were necessary for them to “keep it holy.” “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 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” (Exodus 20:9-10). In verse 11, Moses then reveals why God chose to establish this law as part of His Old Testament covenant. “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" (Exodus 20:11). It is this 11th verse of Exodus chapter 20 that proves the Gap Theory impossible.

Moses' inspired comments regarding the creation week place the forming of the heaven, earth, and sea within the same six day period of time as the making of "all that in them is." It is from the pen of this same prophet Moses that we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). He further recorded for us that on the third day of creation "God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10). These two verses show us the creation of the "heaven and earth" and the creation of the "sea." Moses then tells us that on the fifth day "God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:21). In Genesis 1:25, we read that on the sixth day, "God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." Let us take what we have just read and put it in the form of a logical argument.

1. Exodus 20:11 places the creation of heaven and earth and seas, and the creation of all that lives in them in the same six day period of time.
2. Genesis 1:1, 10, 21, and 25 record for us the creation of heaven and earth, the seas, and all that lives in them.
3. Therefore, the events of Genesis 1:1, 10, 21, and 25 had to have occurred in the same six-day period of time.

As if this were not proof enough, when giving the Ten Commandments, Jehovah also revealed that the six days in which all these things were created were followed by a seventh day on which He rested. This day of rest is recorded for us in Genesis 2:1-2 where we read, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." This shows us that not only did the events of Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 occur in the same six-day period of time, but that everything recorded from Genesis 1:1-Genesis 2:2 occurred within the same seven-day period of time. That makes it impossible to accept the teaching of Moses in Exodus chapter 20 and still find a gap of time between verses one and two of Genesis chapter one.

At this point let us also notice Genesis 2:3. "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God **created** and **made**." (emp. PDM) Some have argued that the Gap Theory is actually supported by the Bible because two different Hebrew words are used in describing how God brought things into being. They argue that the Hebrew word *bara*, translated "created" in Genesis 2:3, refers to something brought into existence from nothing and the Hebrew word *asah*, translated "made" in Genesis 2:3, refers to something that is made over or reconditioned from materials already existing. Not only do these definitions disagree with almost all Hebrew scholars and lexicographers, but Genesis 2:3 uses the words interchangeably and applies both to the Divine activities performed during the period of time that according to Exodus 20:11 occurred in six days.

It is very clear from these passages that one cannot believe the writing of inspired Moses in the giving of the Ten Commandments and also believe there is a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

Matthew 19:1-6

This passage finds our Lord on the earth in the form of man (Philippians 2:5-8). As His travels in the land of Palestine brought Him to the “coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan...great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there” (Matthew 19:1-2). But we learn that “the Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” (Matthew 19:3) In answering their question, Jesus directs their attention and ours not back to the Law of Moses, but to the beginning of time. Jesus,

answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that **he which made them at the beginning** made them male and female, And said, **For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife:** and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt 19:4-6, emp. PDM).

It is these words of Jesus that make it impossible for the Gap Theory to be true.

Jesus places the creation of man and woman and the institution of marriage at the “beginning.” He further marks this place in time by quoting Genesis 2:24, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” This passages gives us two very clear markers that we can and must use to identify the “beginning.” The first is the creation of “male and female.” The second is the uniting of man and wife in marriage. Since both of these events are recorded for us in Genesis chapter two, we know that they took place on the sixth day of the creation week that is recorded in Genesis chapter one. That means the sixth day of creation was “at the beginning.” This makes the Gap Theory impossible.

If the Gap Theory were true placing billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, the events of the sixth day of creation, occurring only a few thousand years ago, would not have taken place “at the beginning.” but rather much nearer the end. When we accept the Genesis account of creation as literal, we accept the creation of man and the institution of marriage within the first six days of all things temporal. If we accept the Gap Theory, we place these same events billions of years after the beginning of the earth. It does not require a scholar to determine which of these agrees with the teaching of our Lord.

This passage should show us how dangerous it is to reject the historical account of the creation the Master has given us. While many who claim to be Christians flock to the Gap Theory in an attempt to salve their pseudo-scientific intellect, they can only do so by rejecting the words of the One who died for them. Jesus warned us that “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). All these things that have been created will one day vanish away “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower

thereof falleth away: But **the word of the Lord endureth for ever**. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:24-25, emp. PDM).

It is very clear from these passages that one cannot believe the words of our Lord and Savior regarding “the beginning” and also believe there is a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

Romans 5:12-17; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

These two passages combine to teach us that sin has entered into the world. That means there was a time that the world existed, but without sin. These passages also teach us that with sin came death. That is the observable effect of sin as can consistently be seen on an individual scale as well. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15). Romans chapter five and 1 Corinthians chapter 15 further teach us that both sin and death entered by Adam. At first glance this might not seem to be significant to our discussion of the Gap Theory, but it is. For the Gap Theory to be true, there must be billions of years of living and dying here on earth **before Adam**.

The Gap Theory says that sin entered the world when Satan was cast down to the earth after his fall. The Bible says, “... **by one man** sin entered into the world...” (Romans 5:12, emp. PDM). The Bible says that the man by whom sin entered was Adam. “Nevertheless death reigned **from Adam** to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of **Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him that was to come” (Romans 5:14, emp. PDM). If you believe what the Bible says about how sin entered the world, you cannot believe the Gap Theory.

The Gap Theory demands that there were billions of years of death and destructions that eventually led to the earth becoming “without form, and void.” The Bible says, “And the earth **was without form, and void**...” (Genesis 1:2, emp. PDM). The word “was” is a problem for those who teach the Gap Theory and for that reason they attack it. They do all they can to change it from the word “was” to the word “became.” They appeal to Isaiah 45:18, “God himself that 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” (emp. PDM). The word “vain” is the same Hebrew word we find in Genesis 1:2 translated “without form.” They argue that if God did not create “in vain/without form” then it must have “become” “in vain/without form.” In his book *Creation Compromises*, brother Bert Thompson answers this charge by placing Isaiah 45:18 back in its context. He writes,

The immediate context, however, has to do with Israel, and God's promises to His people. Isaiah reminded his listeners that just as God had a purpose in creating the Earth, so He had a purpose for Israel. Isaiah spoke of God's immense power and special purpose in creation, noting that God created the Earth “to be inhabited”—something accomplished when the Lord created people in His image. In Isaiah 45, the prophet's message is that God, through His power, likewise will accomplish His purpose for His chosen people (228).

The Gap Theory says there was death and destruction on the earth billions of years before Adam. The Bible says, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. **For as in Adam** all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, emp. PDM).

It is very clear from these passages that one cannot believe the words of the apostle Paul regarding the entrance of sin and death to the world and also believe there is a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

I pray that we can all understand that in accepting the Gap Theory we are not making a harmless choice. When man differs with God, we cannot accept what man says without rejecting what God has said. Let us all take the advice of the wise man to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Works Cited

Thompson, Bert (nd). *Creation Compromises*, Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, Inc.