

Notes on the Gap Theory

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Introduction

Below is a discussion of one of the major interpretations of the Genesis account of creation, the Gap Theory. Its popularity has decreased in recent years but it is still widely taught in some Bible-believing schools. I have attempted to define it clearly and then refute it. I believe it to be an unnecessary compromise with the rise of modern evolution.

Definition

The Gap Theory (sometimes called Interval Theory) is the theory which places a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. This gap of time tries to account for the long geologic ages assumed by secular geology as well as explain the existence of the fossil record. The following features appear to be the major points of the theory which was popularized in the early part of this century by the Scofield Reference Bible:

- I. Genesis 1:1 gives an account of the original creation of everything from nothing by God.
- II. There is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 during which the following takes place:
 - A. Satan rebels against God through pride.
 - B. Satan causes sin in the pre-Adamite race. Apparently, there was a race of beings created by God before Adam and Eve. There would also be an assumed plant and animal kingdom to go along with this race of beings. Support for this is Isa. 14:12 which indicates that Lucifer weakened the nations (of pre-Adamite men).
 - C. God judges the pre-Adamite world (the world before Adam) in a catastrophic way. This is usually believed to be a world-wide flood (called Lucifer's Flood).
- III. Genesis 1:2 describes the result of the catastrophic judgment of God which takes place in the gap above. To help in this description it is usually asserted that there is a mistake in the translation of the verse. It actually should say "And the earth 'become' (not 'was') without form and void." The words "without form and void" are taken to refer to the waste of destruction not the incomplete process of one creation day. The basis for this assertion is that those words in other contexts together indicate a judgment producing desolation (Jer. 4:23, Isa. 34:11).
- IV. Genesis 1:3 and the following verses are taken to give the six days of recreation or remaking of the earth which includes the creation of a new race headed up by Adam and Eve.

- V. The remaking of the earth allows for the following evidences of the pre-Adamite world to exist:
- A. The fossil record gives the remains of the pre-Adamite race, animals of the pre-Adamite world (including dinosaurs), and plants from the pre-Adamite plant kingdom.
 - B. The geologic column records the lengthy ages of the pre-Adamite world which is assumed to be millions of years. Evidence of catastrophe at the end of pre-Adamite world due to the judgment of God is harmonized with the uniform processes of the geologic ages.
 - C. The spirits of the pre-Adamite race of beings are assumed to be the demons described later in the Bible which seek to inhabit the bodies of men and animals.

Refutation

I cannot hold to the Gap Theory as an accurate interpretation of the Genesis account of creation for the following reasons:

1. The Hebrew word for “and” which starts Gen. 1:2 is a construction which unites verse one with verse two. That is, verse two continues what verse one started. The Gap Theory separates the two verses, saying that verse two starts something brand new. The Hebrew will not allow this.
2. The Hebrew word “was” is correctly translated in the KJV. Although it can mean “became” in certain contexts, there is no reason to translate it anything other than “was” unless the Gap Theory has already been proven to be true on other grounds!
3. The Gap Theory states that sin and death entered into the world through Satan and the pre-Adamite race. The fossil record is the judgment on this sin. However, the Bible teaches that sin and death came upon the world through Adam (Rom. 5:12ff, Gen. 3:17, 18). This has also some cosmic significance (see Rom. 5:18ff). But death according to the Gap Theory comes in the gap between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 not as a result of Adam’s sin in Gen. 3.
4. The Gap Theory states that Satan’s fall into sin occurs in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. However, Ez. 28:12-16 points to Satan in the garden of Eden in sinless perfection. But the garden of Eden was not created until after Adam was created (Gen. 2:7-8). Therefore, Eden did not exist until at least the sixth day of creation. Thus, the earliest time for the fall of Satan is the sixth day of creation. Clarence Larkin in Dispensational Truth holds to the Gap Theory and recognizes this problem. So he says that Eden in Ez. 28 is a different Eden than the one in Genesis. There is no reason to do that unless you have a theory that is in serious trouble!

5. If the Gap Theory were true, then it does not make the best sense for God to exclaim that the “recreation” was “very good” when the new race of men will be walking on top of death and decay (the fossils, etc).
6. The Gap Theory minimizes the significance of Noah’s flood. Later in this series of lessons it will be demonstrated that Noah’s flood was a world-wide cataclysmic event, not a tranquil or local flood. If that is true, then Lucifer’s Flood during the gap is unnecessary to explain the fossil record. Noah’s flood will suffice. Why put a world-wide flood “between” two verses when there are three whole chapters (Gen. 6-8) which outline in detail the nature of a world-wide flood.
7. The Gap Theory is an interpretation which reads into the Bible a view of the world which is obtained from outside the Bible (certain scientific observations). This information is then used to “read between the lines” (literally, between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2). Such an approach to Bible interpretation is unacceptable. The Bible should be interpreted plainly and scientific observations judged based upon Bible teaching, not the other way around.
8. Those who hold to the Gap Theory often criticize literalists by saying that the literal six-day view causes God to have an imperfect creation at points along the creation process. This they say is unacceptable since God never does anything imperfectly. Such reasoning is wrong for the following reasons:
 - A. It is not that God did something imperfectly but that He did something incompletely, that is, in stages.
 - B. The Bible as revelation was given in stages with earlier revelations looked upon as incomplete. Why could not God then give creation in stages?
 - C. Jesus, who is God, performed a miracle in stages. In Mark 8:22-26 Jesus had to put his hands upon the eyes of a blind man twice before he received full sight. Does this mean that Jesus was imperfect?
9. If the Gap Theory were true, there would be grounds for saying that Satan became the “god of this world” before “dominion” had been given to Adam and Eve (see Gen. 1:26). This is a possible conflict.
10. The words “without form and void” as found in passages like Isa. 34:11, Jer. 4:23, and Isa. 45:18 refer to waste and destruction because the context implies destruction. The idea of waste and destruction is not inherent in the words themselves as seen by the use of them throughout the Old Testament Hebrew text. This is an important point since the New Scofield Reference Bible moved its note on the Gap Theory from Gen. 1:2 to Isa. 45:18. Apparently those who hold to the Gap Theory believe Isa. 45:18 to be the strongest point in their favor. However, the words themselves simply mean “unformed and unfilled” not any kind of waste and destruction, i.e., chaos.

11. The fact that fossils of animals and plants currently living in our world exist in the record makes it difficult to distinguish between the pre-Adamite world and the present world.
12. The passage which says that Lucifer “weakened” the nations (Is. 14:12) does not necessarily imply that there was a race of people to compose nations before Adam. The passage refers directly to the King of Babylon, not to Satan. It has been taken as referring to Satan by analogy by the Church down through the years. The King of Babylon is like Satan. He demonstrates this by weakening the nations as Satan had done since the fall of Adam (when Adam lost dominion and Satan became the god of this world).
13. It is hard to relegate dinosaurs to the pre-Adamite world when Job 40:15-41:34 describes behemoth and leviathan which appear to harmonize with dinosaur descriptions. This would put dinosaurs contemporary with man, certainly in Job’s lifetime. Recall that Job was a contemporary with Abraham.
14. Later in this series the age of the earth will be discussed. For now it is important to note that a young age for the earth can be justified scientifically. Therefore, there is no reason to hold to Gap Theory in order to accommodate an old age for the earth. In essence, I am saying that the Gap Theory is not only contradicted by the Bible but also by science.
15. It is argued that the souls of pre-Adamite beings are now demons which need bodies to inhabit, hence, the attempt to possess humans in our world. However, this is not necessary since we know Satan himself attempts to inhabit humans (Judas) and he is described as an “anointed cherub” in Ez. 28 implying he is an angelic being not a being with a physical body.
16. If there was a large pre-Adamite race (which is implied by the supposed reference to “weakened nations”), where are the extensive fossil records of that race? The fossil record does not contain vast amounts of information about human-like beings. This would be unlikely if the Gap Theory were true.
17. These reasons (and more could be given) are given to show that the Gap Theory is not adequate to explain the creation account in the Bible nor the world as we know it (especially in the fossil record). This does not mean that all those who hold to the Gap Theory are unspiritual Christians. It simply means they are wrong on this point of interpretation. On the other hand, do not be intimidated by scientific theories. In the end, the literal interpretation of the Bible will be demonstrated to be the truth that it is.