

THE GAP THEORY: WHO HOLDS IT

- The Gap Theory was held strongly by dispensational teachers like E.W. Bullinger and C.I. Scofield and taught through their reference Bibles.
- The theory was displayed in Clarence Larkin's book, *Dispensational Truth*.
- One hundred years ago, virtually all dispensationalists would have subscribed to this theory.

THE GAP THEORY, IN POSITIVE LIGHT

- According to the Scofield Reference Bible, Genesis 1:1 refers to "The first creative act refers to the dateless past, and gives scope for all the geologic ages."¹
- If Genesis 1:2 is compared to Scripture, a strong case can be built which says that the earth *became formless and void* and had not previously been in such a state.
- Jeremiah 4:23-26 –
 - What is Jeremiah looking at? Both **the earth** and **the heavens** (v. 23).
 - What condition does he find them in? The earth was **without form, and void**. The heavens **had no light**.
 - How did this happen? **The fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger** (v. 26).
 - These verses sound like God sent a judgment upon the earth that brought about a **formless, and void** (v. 26) state, in which there was **no light** (v. 26).
- Isaiah 24:1 – This verse makes a strong case that the way the earth became **formless and void** (Gen. 1:2) was that *the Lord made it that way in His anger*.
- Isaiah 45:18 tells us that the Genesis 1:1 state is *not* the way the Lord intended the earth to be.
- 2 Peter 3:5-7 speaks of last days scoffers who are *willfully ignorant* (v. 5).
 - The verses speak of the heavens and earth **of old** (v. 5), and of **the world that then was** (v. 6).
 - But then the verses speak of **the heavens and the earth, which are now** (v. 6), giving the understanding of an *old earth* and a *new earth*.
- These passages interpret Genesis 1:1-2 to show a *gap* that is between these verses.

¹ C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York; London; Toronto; Melbourne; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1917), viii.

THE GAP THEORY, CRITIQUED AND REJECTED

THE THEORY CRITIQUED BIBLICALLY

- The context of Jeremiah 4:23-26 is *not* the creation and recreation of the earth, but rather a prophetic word against Judah.
 - Verse 22 explains the context: **My people is foolish...**
 - Verse 27 confirms the context, and helps us understand that which is in consideration, namely **the whole land** of Judah. Note that **land** in v. 27 is the same word as **earth** in 23.
- The context of Isaiah 24:1 also calls into question whether the passage can be used to explain the creation account.
 - Verse 3 explains the context, speaking of the **land** of Israel.
 - In context, the words **scattereth abroad** mean *exactly what they say*. In the Gap theory, one must make them mean *more than they say*.
- Isaiah 45:18 – only tells us that Genesis 1:2 is not the final state, which the reader of Genesis would clearly understand. The verse aligns with a six-day view as much as a Gap view.
- 2 Peter 3:5-7 *can* be taken to refer to the pre-flood earth as **the world that then was** (2 Pet. 3:6).
- In the final analysis, the exegetical argument for the Gap theory is weak.

THE THEORY CRITIQUED SCIENTIFICALLY

- The "energized universe" theory that we have been discussing this weekend falls apart with the Gap Theory because our theory is built upon God's creation of *unenergized elements* and then *moving on them*, and starting the energetic process.
- The theory has an "accommodation problem." It looks as if the proponents were simply trying to accommodate the popular "old age" scientific theories.
 - Scofield's note on v. 3: "The sense is, made to *appear*; made *visible*. The sun and moon were *created* "in the beginning." The "light" of course came from the sun, but the vapour diffused the light. Later the sun appeared in an unclouded sky."²
 - While the Gap Theory predates Darwin, we should note that the Darwinian Theory *also predates Darwin!*³

THE THEORY CRITIQUED THEOLOGICALLY

- The biggest challenge to the theory comes from Genesis 1:31.
- Can the creation be **very good** if it is built upon the ruins of an ancient civilization that was damned in judgment? And can it be **very good** if the serpent is slithering in the grass?

² Ibid.

³ See, for example, <https://nikolaussucher.github.io/biology-text/the-theory-of-evolution-1.html>.