

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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FALLING INTO THE "GAP" TRAP!

Part One

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Many Christians are concerned that if we do not reconcile the Bible's account of creation with the scientific theories which demand an ancient earth, that the scientific community will have no respect for the Scriptures. Since God is the author of both true science and the Bible, the two will never actually contradict each other, although one's misunderstanding of either or both may seem to create a conflict between the two. We should not be too quick to jump when science makes some claim, scurrying to try to adapt the Bible to the latest scientific theories. Claims are one thing, convincing proof of those claims against the Bible is something which science is still trying to develop.

Science, perhaps we should say pseudo-science, contends that the earth is billions of years old and that a long, slow evolution of the earth and forms of life can be proved by studying the earth's geologic layers. Some Christians, anxious to honor the claims of science without meaning to dishonor the Bible, have sought to find ways to reconcile Genesis 1:1-31 with these so-called scientific facts. In place of accepting Genesis 1 as a creation chapter which deals with a single six day creation, beginning with verse 1 and concluding with verse 31, these brethren look for ways to squeeze the vast amounts of time demanded by science into the creation record of Genesis.

There are two basic places in Genesis 1 where this "time" is forced into the text. The first is immediately after verse 1, where it is insisted that there must have been a "gap" in time of possibly billions of years between the time God "created" the heaven and earth and the time when God began to "make" or refashion the earth for man in verses 3-31. We are told that the original creation of verse 1 was possibly a creation which God allowed to evolve slowly from simple to more complex forms of life, until He was ready to prepare the earth for and to create man-

kind. Another suggested possibility is that for some reason God destroyed this previous creation (whatever it consisted of) and that the fossils formed in the earth's strata are indicative of this creation and the vast "gap" of time supposed to exist between Genesis 1:1 and the rest of that chapter. The second place some have sought to insert long periods of time into Genesis 1, in order to accommodate the claims of science, is in the "days" of the creation. This theory says that each of the six days of Genesis 1 is an exceptionally long period of time, during which evolution occurred, resulting in the fossils and geologic stages which science claims are billions of years old. Quite a bit has been written on the "day equals a long age theory," so we will consider only the "gap" theory in this article. There are variations of both the day/age and gap theories, and whether intended or not, all efforts to promote such bring about a compromising of the Genesis record and other Scriptures.

Are There Two Creations in Genesis 1?

If men were not trying to bow to the claims of false science, it is not likely that the gap or day/age theories would have been suggested from reading Genesis 1. A simple straight-forward reading of the chapter seems to include verses 1-5 in the "first day"; verses 6-8 in the second; verses 9-13 in the third; and so on through the sixth day, when God completed His work. One has to do his own creating in order to make a place for a time gap of billions of years.

For example, there are words in each verse of the "first day" section (verses 1-5) which connect the sentences to each other in a progression of thought, excluding any break in thought for a gap of vast time. The "earth" mentioned in verse 1 is emphasized again in verse 2; the "darkness" in verse 2 is contrasted with the "light" in verse 3; the "light" in verse 3 is divided from the "darkness" in verse 4; and light was called "Day" and darkness was called

"Night" in verse 5, ending the "first day." Where is any pause in thought or progression to allow for insertion of a previous creation, different from what is set forth in the rest of Genesis 1? There is none!

Those who hold to a "ruin and reconstruction" theory for the gap period state that after the initial creation of verse 1, a long, long time passed and God brought that first creation to ruin. When verse 2 says that "the earth was without form and void," it is claimed that this was a state of destruction and chaos brought about by God as some kind of punishment. Various suggestions are given as to why God did so, but we have no space to discuss them here. The following verses (3-31) are then supposed to be a "reconstruction" of the ruined earth to shape it for man's habitation. It does not seem to deter the brethren who promote this theory that not a word of it can be read from the text of Genesis 1, unless it is inserted.

The phrase "without form and void" (Hebrew - *tohu wabohu*) does not necessarily mean the state of something brought to ruin. Those words can mean something not yet formed or useful, and empty. In the context of Genesis 1 it means that when God created the physical elements of the earth in verse 1, He did not bring them into being in a completely organized state. The elements were created but the earth was "unformed and unfilled." This earth was a work in progress which was formed and filled in the rest of the process of creation, described in the remainder of the chapter. [See the **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament**, Vol. 2, edited by Harris, Archer, & Waltke, (Moody Press, 1980), pp. 964-65.] The earth did not "become" to a state of emptiness because of God's wrath, as gap proponents claim. It "was" that way as a result of creation by God, but its unformed and unfilled status was only a brief step on its way to a completion which God said was "very good" (1:31). None of the standard translations of Genesis 1:2 say, "the earth **became** without form and void." Even the Jewish Publication Society of America's Bible says, "Now the earth **was** unformed and void" (Philadelphia,

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

1917/1964). Hebrew scholarship is not on the side of those who try to promote the gap theory. Oswald T. Allis captures what must be the true design of this creation chapter of Genesis 1 and then notes how the gap theory destroys that intention.

The first objection to this gap theory is that it throws the account of Creation almost completely out of balance. To regard the words of Genesis 1:1 as a brief statement (or heading) which is amplified in the rest of the chapter makes this entire chapter deal with the original creation. But when verse 1 is regarded as stating or announcing—it does not describe in any way—an original creation which was reduced to desolation (verse 2) and restored in six days (verses 3-31), **the character of the chapter is radically changed**. It becomes almost wholly an account not of the creation, but of the re-creating or repairing of that original creation. This is the most obvious objection to this interpretation. **It seems highly improbable that an original creation, which according to this theory brought into existence a world of wondrous beauty, would be dismissed with a single sentence and so many verses be devoted to what would be in a sense merely a restoration of it.** [*God Spake By Moses* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1951), p. 153] (emphasis supplied—TJC)

There is no previous creation in Genesis 1:1 which evolved for hundreds of millions or billions of years, until God destroyed it and prepared the earth for man's habitation. Genesis 1:1-31 describes **the** single creation event of the bringing into being of the heaven and earth and the forming and filling of that earth in six days, just as Moses stated in Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is..."

The second part of this article on the "gap trap" will discuss the manner in which gap advocates attempt to use the words "create" (Hebrew - bara) and "made" (Hebrew - asah) to establish their doctrine of a previous creation. They also deny that Exodus 20:11 refers to the creation event of Genesis 1:1. [to be continued]

DENYING WHAT WE AFFIRM

by B. J. Clarke

It is very fashionable today to affirm a relationship with God while denying such a relationship by one's manner of life and conduct. This type of attitude is not new to our age, for Paul said of some in his day, *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate"* (Titus 1:16).

How descriptive and relevant are these words as they relate to the attitudes and actions of the men and women of our day. Stars and celebrities from the film and music industry have helped to spread the notion that a right relationship with God is enjoyed by simply professing to know him. I shall never forget catching a glimpse of a music awards program several years ago on television. "Prince," a popular rock star who is well known for filthy lyrics in his songs and sexually suggestive music videos, was coming to the microphone to express his gratitude for the award he had just received. As he gave his acceptance speech he said, "I just want to praise God tonight." I practically came out of my chair in disbelief. As if he could hear me, I said aloud, "If you really want to praise God then clean up your music and your life."

I was reminded of Titus 1:16 as I listened to his words that night. Here was a man that professed to know God and yet he denied such by his manner of speech and conduct. Those who truly want to please and praise God are careful to let no corrupt speech proceed out of their mouths

(Eph. 4:29). If "Prince" were truly interested in honoring the real Prince of Peace and Lord of life, then he would keep His commandments (John 14:15).

Madonna is another classic example of one who professes to know God while denying such a profession by her wicked deeds. Her wearing of the crucifix does not fool God into believing that she truly loves his Son who died upon that instrument of death. Madonna once said she wore the crucifix because it was sexy due to the fact that a half-naked man died upon it. Several months ago a spokesman for Madonna appeared on one of the morning talk shows attempting to convince the viewing public that Madonna is full of faith and extremely religious. How in the world can people be so warped in their sense of what it means to know God? The answer is found in the last phrase of Titus 1:15 — *"their mind and conscience are defiled."* Madonna denies the very thing she affirms by the deeds she performs. By her works she denies God, being abominable, disobedient and unto every good work reprobate. God could well say of many today, *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me"* (Matt. 15:8).

Knowing God is more than mere lip service and wearing a gold cross on a chain around our neck. The words of 1 John 2:3-6 clearly define what it takes to truly know God, *"And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."*

Prince, Madonna and other entertainment figures are certainly and sadly not the only ones who affirm their love for God while denying that very affirmation by the way that they live. Political leaders often affirm a strong faith in God and the Bible and then turn right around and enact policies which are diametrically opposed to God and His word. If these men truly know God, they will honor His teaching on all subjects, including abortion and homosexuality. Yet, by their works they deny Him and practice disobedience and abomination under the guise of love for God and religious freedom. Entertainer Garth Brooks expressed his

support for homosexuals and said that this was so hard to do because of his love for the Bible. Thus, he denies the very thing he affirms. If he truly loves the Bible as he claims to, then he will believe what it teaches about homosexuality (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

Finally, it must be admitted that even some members of the Lord's church are guilty of affirming their love for God while denying it by their actions. They profess to love God with all of their heart, soul, strength and mind and then fail to attend all of the services. They sing that they want to be workers for the Lord and then spurn every opportunity afforded unto them to prove it. We must realize that God sees through all of our hypocritical masks and knows how we really feel about Him (Psalm 33:13-15; Heb. 4:13; John 2:24, 25). Instead of wearing a gold cross around our necks, let us bear the cross we have been called by Christ to bear (Luke 9:23). Rather than denying God by our works, let us deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24). Let us never be guilty of denying what we affirm.

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

by Ed Allard, Jr.

In Matthew 16:18 we read of Jesus' promise to build His church. When was that done? How was the church of Christ established in the first century? Acts 2 shows that on the Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, the apostle Peter preached God's message of salvation (Romans 1:16) to unbelieving Jews. He preached Jesus, crucified, raised from the grave and made both Lord and Christ. The Jews convicted of sin and convinced that Jesus was truly the Son of God, evidenced their belief in asking, "What shall we do?" And they were told what to do. They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin (Acts 2:37-38).

Three thousand did not quibble but gladly received the word and were immersed. And the Lord added daily to the church those who were being saved (2:41, 47).

How was the church established all over the world in the days of the apostles? In the same way. How did the church continue spreading throughout the world after the death of the apostles? By following the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). How is the church of Christ established in the 20th century? In the same way.

Following God's Pattern

In every age of time, mankind was told by God what to do and given a pattern to follow. That pattern is in His revealed word, the Bible. That word is inspired, given by the Holy Spirit who controlled its writings so that they were without error.

In Genesis 2:8, 15-17 we have a summary of the pattern given for the life of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. God told Adam what he was to do and what he was not to do. God expected of Adam exactly what He expects of us. He expected Adam to listen to Him, understand what He had said and do just exactly as He said. He expects no more of us, but He expects and requires exactly that of us. We can see this illustrated in story after story in the Old Testament, whether Noah, Abram, Moses, or others.

When we read these stories of the men of God of old, and see how God interacted with them and what God expected and required of them, we see what God expects and requires of us. He does not tell us the same things to do that He told them. We are not under the same law they were under. But God tells us what we are to do and not do and He expects us to listen to Him, understand Him and do just exactly as He has said. His message for us today is in the New Testament.

As if emphasizing the message of what God expects and requires of us, the Holy Spirit, in the case of Noah and Moses, tells us that they did just exactly what God had told them to do. A detailed pattern was given to Noah, a blueprint, for building the ark. Genesis 6:22 tells us that Noah did according to all that God commanded him. A detailed pattern was given to Moses to build the tabernacle (Exodus 25:9). In verse 40 we see God emphasizing to Moses to build according to the pattern. Under the law of Moses, the Israelites were also given a detailed pattern for their life. Under the New Testament law of Christ we do not have such a detailed pattern, but nevertheless, the pattern we are given is to be followed, just as Moses and the Israelites were to follow the pattern given.

Jesus says, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus has given us a pattern to follow and He expects us to listen to Him, understand Him and do just what He said.

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of the Father in heaven." In Hebrews 5:8-9 we are told concerning Jesus, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 we are told that when Jesus returns He will take vengeance on those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel. One cannot do the will of the Father to enter the kingdom of heaven or obey the gospel without listening to Jesus, understanding Him and doing just as He has said. Jesus gives us God's pattern for today (Hebrews 1:1-2).

To follow God's pattern given by Jesus is to obey God. If we change the pattern by adding to or taking from the word, acting without His commandment, going beyond what is written, or by failing to abide in the doctrine of Christ, we are not obeying God. If we change the pattern God has given us in any of these ways we are not obeying God. One cannot obey the will of the Father without knowing that will. One cannot obey the gospel without knowing the commands of the Gospel. One cannot follow the pattern of God without obeying what the pattern calls for. Our concern is the pattern God has given us through Jesus in the New Testament, not the pattern given to the Jews through Moses, that we are to follow.

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ENEMIES OF THE WORD OF GOD

by Bruce Stulting

The preacher spoke the truth when he said, "of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12). From the beginning of the written word millions of books have been penned. From time to time a book comes along that receives such wide acceptance that it becomes the definitive work in a given field or subject. Other books are opposed and rejected by many for various reasons. Yet, of all the books ever written, none has had so many enemies as the Bible. Many dynamic, learned and influential men have openly declared that they would destroy this Book of books. Diocletian, Roman Emperor 284-305 A.D., burned Bibles and erected a monument stating: "Extinct is the name of Christian." The Roman Empire lays

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

in ruins, yet Christianity continues today. Thomas Paine (1737-1809 A.D.) made the statement, "Five years from now there will not be a Bible in America." Yet the Bible remains at the top of the best seller list. Voltaire (1694-1778 A.D.), a French skeptic, said, "Within 100 years the Bible will be a forgotten book." Voltaire's own writing sits forgotten on the shelf and the Bible continues to grow in popularity. The Bible remains the most read, the most translated and most influential book ever written.

Surely, those who wage open warfare against the Word will soon be exposed. Truly, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." (Psa. 14:1). However, there are many who are enemies of the Word who are not so obvious. Jesus likened them to ravening wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). These enemies are the most dangerous kind. They will profess to be followers of God and believers in Christ. Having gained the trust of the unwary, they will be able to beguile many who will be blinded to their cunning, treacherous attacks aimed at the authority of God's Word. Their attack will never be open and direct! It will come with subtlety and deceit, even as was used by their father Satan in the Garden of Eden (John 8:44). It is by such underhanded and cunning means that Satan beguiles the hearts of the simple, and weakens the faith of all! We MUST be set for the defense of the Gospel (Phil. 1:17).

Those who promise continuous revelation downgrade that which God has revealed in His Word, and minimize its completeness. Such are the enemy of the Bible. We are told that the Scriptures thoroughly furnish us unto all good works and contain all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Anyone relying on conferences, synods or councils to update and modernize God's Word arrays himself against the Bible's completeness and authority and thus becomes its enemy. The priest who advises men that they must have his interpretation to understand the revealed Will of God, demeans the Scriptures and becomes an enemy of the Bible. Jesus stated, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). He didn't say, "Ye shall know someone's interpretation of the truth." The Bereans were considered noble because they searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). The preacher who persuades men to seek salvation on any other terms than those set forth

in the Gospel belittles the Word, and is an enemy of the Bible! The modernist, attacks the Holy Writ by trying to rationalize away the plain record of signs, wonders and miracles recorded within its pages. The man who professes to believe, and does not live it, is also condemned!

Man has made progress by making improvement in industry, transportation, communication, etc. But man cannot improve on God's perfect, inspired will. We must never seek to add to, detract from or substitute anything in God's Word. Paul sternly warns, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Man will never prosper by trying to change God's Word. I can't think of a more fitting verse with which to close this article than Acts 20:32, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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