

THE GAP THEORY – A Study of Genesis 1:1-2 (part four of five)

This segment will focus on Genesis 1:2, where we read the following –

“The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”

Gap theorists claim that Genesis 1:2 describes a pre-Adamic earth in a state of ruin, in need of restoration, due to God’s judgment upon Lucifer and the people in existence at that time. This theory allows them to justify an indeterminate gap of time between this state of ruin and its restoration, initiated in Genesis 1:3.

Just as we provided a common-sense rationale for viewing Genesis 1:1 as an introduction for the creation account of Genesis chapters one and two, we will do the same for Genesis 1:2. First, the expression “formless and void” does not indicate a state of long-standing ruin in need of restoration. This is confirmed when we compare Genesis 1:2 with Isaiah 45:18, where we read the following –

“For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited) . . .”

The contrast above, described by the prophet Isaiah, consists of a world that is suitable for man, as opposed to one that is incompatible with human existence. This distinction harmonizes with Genesis 1:2 in that the earth, in its initial stage of creation, was covered with water (Psalm 136:6). Our survival on earth requires a balance between land and water. All water and no land won’t work; just as all land and no water is also not an option. Isn’t this precisely what the apostle Peter affirms to us in his second epistle? In 2 Peter 3:3-6 (cf. 2 Peter 2:5) we read this –

“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.”

The last-days mockers of the Second Coming will use as their rationale that no such earth-shattering event will occur because no such event has ever occurred, from the beginning of creation until now. Peter counters this by providing us with an ironic illustration of how God took the “formless and void” earth, and **formed** it “out of water and by water,” to be a place where man could live (v5). Then, as a dramatic intervening act of judgment, by means of the earth-shattering event of Noah’s Flood, God returns it to a place where the human race could not exist (v6).