

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

In our previous segment, we left off by quoting from 2 Peter 3:5, with the expression “out of water and by water.” This creative formation of God brought the earth from a condition of being “formless and void,” to one which man could successfully inhabit. In closing our study of the gap theory, we will need to re-visit Isaiah 45:18, a proof text which is as foundational as any, in clarifying the confusion caused by the false teaching known as the gap theory. In Isaiah 45:18, we read –

“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 above passage provides enormous insight for understanding the relationship between Genesis 1:2 and the rest of the creation narrative in Genesis chapters one and two. The word “create” (bara), is used twice by Isaiah, confirming its connection to Genesis 1:1. The word “made” (asah), is used once to describe the creation as a Divine accomplishment. The word “established” (kun), is used once, in reference to how God made the earth “ready” for occupation by man.

However, perhaps the most interesting and significant linguistic usage in Isaiah 45:18, as it pertains to our current discussion, is the word “formed” (yatsar), occurring twice in v18. On seventeen occasions in the Old Testament, “yatsar” is used as a noun, describing a potter as someone who forms clay into a useful vessel. Notice how this pertains directly to God in Isaiah 64:8, where we read this –

“But now, O Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.”

The comparison of God to a potter also occurs in Isaiah 29:16, 45:9, as well as Jeremiah 18:6; and is certainly implied by the apostle Paul in Romans 9:20-21. When “yatsar” is used as a verb, it occurs a minimum of 25x in describing God’s creative activity. Notice the harmony which exists between Isaiah 45:18 and Jeremiah 33:2, where “yatsar” (formed) is coupled with “asah” (made) and “kun” (establish), in declaring God as the Creator of the earth.

We can now arrive at a common-sense conclusion regarding Genesis 1:2 in light of Isaiah 45:18. In its most primitive state of creation, the earth was uninhabitable by man. It was formless and void, but not in a state of ruin due to some pre-Adamic judgment of God. Instead, it was in need of being formed into a place where Adam and Eve could successfully exist. **From the very linguistics of the Old Testament, we can also draw the following analogy: as the potter forms a lump of clay into a useful vessel; so God took the formless and void earth which He had initially created, and deliberately formed it into a place of habitation suitable for man.**