

THE BIBLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH [PART III]

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Parts I and II of this three-part series appeared in the August and September issues. Part III follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

In their attempts to define and defend the Modified Gap Theory (or, for that matter, the standard Gap Theory), proponents insist that there are two Hebrew words [*bara* (create), and *asah* (make)] that **always** must be employed in a completely different sense and **never** may be used interchangeably. This distinction is vital in order to allow the idea that God “created” some things instantaneously by divine fiat but “made” others slowly via naturalistic processes during the alleged “gap” of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Yet the one Bible verse that never has been addressed—much less answered—by proponents of these theories is Nehemiah 9:6.

Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made [*asah*] heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

The following quotation from Weston W. Fields will explain why.

...in Nehemiah 9:6 the objects of God's making (*asa*) include the **heavens**, the **host of heavens**, and the **earth**, and **everything contained in and on it**, and the **seas and everything they contain**, as well as the **hosts of heaven** (probably angels).

Now this is a very singular circumstance, for those who argue for the distinctive usage of *asa* throughout Scripture must, in order to maintain any semblance of consistency, never admit that the same creative acts can be referred to by both the verb *bara* and the verb *asa*. Thus, since Genesis 1:1 says that God **created** (*bara*) the **heavens** and the **earth**, and Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6 contend that he **made** (*asa*) them, there must be **two distinct events** in view here. In order to be consistent and at the same time deal with the evidence, gap theorists must postulate a time when God not only “appointed” or “made to appear” the **firmament**, the **sun**, the **moon** and **stars**, and the **beasts**, but there also must have been a time when he only appointed the **heavens**, the **heaven of heavens**, the **angels** (hosts), the **earth**, **everything on the earth**, the **sea** and **everything in the sea**!

So that, while *asa* is quite happily applied to the firmament, sun, moon, stars, and the beasts, its further application to **everything else contained in the universe**, and, indeed, the universe itself (which the language in both Exodus 20:11 and Nehemiah 9:6 is intended to convey) creates a monstrosity of interpretation which should serve as a reminder to those who try to fit Hebrew words into English molds, that to strait-jacket these words is to destroy the possibility of coherent interpretation completely! (1976, pp. 61-62, emp. in orig.).

John Whitcomb was correct when he concluded:

These examples should suffice to show the absurdities to which we are driven by making distinctions which God never intended to make. For the sake of variety and fullness of expression (a basic and extremely helpful characteristic of Hebrew literature), different verbs are used to convey the concept of supernatural creation. It is particularly clear that whatever shade of meaning the rather flexible verb **made** (*asah*) may bear in other contexts of the Old Testament, in the context of **Genesis 1** it stands as a synonym for **created** (*bara*) [1972, p. 129, parentheses and emp. in orig.].

Further, there is clear and compelling evidence which shows that some of those who advocate either the Gap Theory or the Modified Gap Theory realize that their attempts to make *bara* represent **only** that “which has been created from nothing” are both ill-advised and incorrect. Genesis 1:27 is the passage that reveals the error of such an interpretation: “So God created (*bara*) man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” If the assertion is correct that *bara* can be used **only** to describe something created from nothing, then the obvious conclusion is that in Genesis 1:27 God created man and woman **from nothing**. Yet such a view conflicts with Genesis 2:7, which states quite specifically that God formed man from the dust of the ground.

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The Bible and the Age of the Earth [Part III]
Bert Thompson. 73

DEPARTMENTS

Speaking Schedules. 77

Note from the Editor

*Announcing: Three More
Volumes in the "Scripture
and Science Series"*
Bert Thompson. 80

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How have proponents of these theories attempted to circumvent such an obvious contradiction? John Clayton, the originator and primary defender of the Modified Gap Theory, has suggested—in keeping with his “new vocabulary”—that Genesis 1:27 **really** is saying that when God “created” (*bara*) man, He actually created not man’s **body**, but his **soul** from nothing (1991, p. 9). Such a strained interpretation can be proven wrong by a simple examination of the text. Genesis 1:27 states unequivocally **what** was created—“**male** and **female** created he them.” The question then must be asked: Do souls come in “male” and “female” varieties? Of course not. Souls are spirits, and as such are sexless (e.g., as Jesus said angels were—Matthew 22:29-30). Yet those who defend varieties of the Gap Theory advocate a doctrine which implies that male and female souls exist. A well-known principle in elementary logic is that any argument with a false premise (or false premises) is unsound. Thus, the Gap Theory and Modified Gap Theory are unsound.

(3) Taking the creation passages at face value and in their proper context, it is obvious that no distinction is made between the act of creating and the act of making. For example, God’s activity during this first week is described in terms other than creating or making. This includes the phrase, “Let there be,” which is used to usher in each new day and the things created in that day. Also, note that God “divided” the light from the darkness, and He “set” the light-giving objects in the expanse of the sky. How would John Clayton’s new vocabulary deal with these verbs?

(4) There is ample and compelling evidence that the two words *bara* and *asah* **are used interchangeably** throughout the Old Testament. Mr. Clayton, of course, adamantly denies that this is the case. He has stated: “It is difficult to believe that there would be two words used to convey the same process” (1990, p. 7). Yet why is it difficult to imagine that two different words might be used to describe exactly the same process? Writers commonly employ different words to describe the same thing(s), thereby providing “stylistic relief”—a grammatical construct which avoids the needless repetition that occurs by using the same words over and over. For more than a

hundred years, conservative scholars have made a similar point to proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis, arguing that there is no reasonable way to “dissect” the Old Testament on the basis of the words Elohim (translated “God”) and Yahweh (translated “Jehovah” or “Lord”).

Bible writers often employed different words to describe the same thing(s). For example, in the four Gospels Christ is spoken of as having been killed, crucified, and slain. Where is the distinction? New Testament writers often spoke of the church, the body, and the kingdom—which are exactly the same thing. Where is the difference? Why should anyone find it so difficult to accept that different words may be used to describe the same thing or event?

Furthermore, the Scriptures are replete with examples which prove that *bara* and *asah* **are** used interchangeably. For example, in Psalm 148:1-5 the writer spoke of the “creation” (*bara*) of the angels. Yet when Nehemiah addressed the creation of angels, he employed the word *asah* to describe that event (9:6). In Genesis 1:1, as John Clayton has admitted, the text speaks of God “creating” (*bara*) the Earth. Yet, when Nehemiah spoke of that same event, he employed the word *asah* to do so (9:6). When Moses wrote of the “creation” of man, he used *bara* (Genesis 1:27). Yet one verse before that (1:26), he spoke of God “making” (*asah*) man. Moses even employed the two words **in the same verse** (Genesis 2:4): “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were **created** [*bara*], in the day that Jehovah **made** [*asah*] earth and heaven.”

Clayton has said that the Earth was **created** (*bara*) from nothing in Genesis 1:1. But Moses said in Genesis 2:4 that the Earth was **made** (*asah*). Clayton is on record as stating that the use of *asah* can refer **only** to that which is made from something already in existence. Does he therefore believe that when Moses spoke of the Earth being “made,” it was formed from something already in existence?

And what about Exodus 20:11 in this context? Moses wrote: “For in six days the Lord made [*asah*] heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.” Clayton has written that this speaks only of God’s “forming” from some-

thing already in existence. But notice that the verse specifically speaks of the **heavens**, the **Earth**, the **seas**, and **all that in them is**. Does Clayton thus contend that God formed the heavens from something already in existence? Exodus 20:11 speaks of **everything** made by God in the six days of creation. Yet Mr. Clayton has admitted that “creation (*bara*) does not occur again until animal life is described in verses 20 and 21.” How can this be? Moses stated that God “made” (*asab*) everything in the creation week. Now Clayton says there was “creation” (*bara*) going on in that same week. Even John Clayton, therefore, has admitted that there are times when the two words describe the same events during the same time period!

(5) Weston Fields observed that forcing *bara* and *asab* to refer to completely separate acts results in a “monstrosity of interpretation”—which is exactly what John Clayton’s suggested usage of these words represents. Clayton teaches that at the end of Genesis 1:1 there existed a **fully functional** Earth (complete with various kinds of life teeming on it) and that it remained that way for eons of time. If that is the case—based on his *bara/asab* argument—how would he explain the following problem?

Clayton has taught that the “heavenly bodies” (Sun, Moon, stars, etc.) were a part of the *bara*-type creation of Genesis 1:1. But Exodus 20:11 specifically states that they were “made” (*asab*). Are we to believe, then, that they were **both** “created” and “made”? Yes, that is exactly what Clayton has advocated.

Applied in this literal sense to Genesis 1, one would find that the **heaven and earth** were brought into existence miraculously in Genesis 1:1. This would include the sun, moon, stars, galaxies, black holes, nebula, comets, asteroids and planets.... Verses 14-19 would not describe the creation of the sun, moon and stars, but the reshaping or rearranging of them to a finished form (1989, p. 6).

How were the Sun, Moon, and stars (“created,” Clayton says, in Genesis 1:1) assisting the Earth in being “fully functional” when they themselves had not even been “rearranged to a finished form”? One hardly could have a fully functional Earth without the Sun and Moon. Yet by his own

admission, Genesis 1:14-19 speaks of God doing **something** to those heavenly bodies. For centuries Bible scholars have accepted that it is in these verses that God is described as bringing the heavenly bodies into existence. But no, says Clayton, that is not true. They were in existence from Genesis 1:1, but they apparently had not yet been “rearranged to a finished form”—something that would not occur until billions of years later. How could these **unfinished** heavenly bodies have been of any use to a **finished** Earth? How could the Earth be “functional” unless the Sun, Moon, and other planets were “functional” as well? And if they were “functional” in Genesis 1:1, why “rearrange” them?

Clayton is on record as stating: “When we look at those places where the word ‘make’ is used, the context leaves absolutely no doubt about what the intention of the author is for that passage” (1979, p. 5). I could not agree more. There is **absolutely no doubt** about how the Bible writers employed these words. They used them just as any author would employ them—interchangeably.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In any discussion of the Bible and the age of the Earth, there are several additional considerations that should be examined.

“From the Beginning of the Creation”/ “From the Creation of the World”

In Mark 10:6, Jesus declared concerning Adam and Eve: “**But from the beginning of the creation**, Male and female made he them.” Christ thus dated the first humans from the creation week. The Greek word for “beginning” is *arché*, and is used of “**absolute**, denoting the **beginning of the world** and of its history, the beginning of creation.” The word in the Greek for “creation” is *ktiseos*, and denotes “**the sum-total of what God has created**” (Cremer, 1962, pp. 113, 114, 381, emp. in orig.). In addressing this point, Wayne Jackson wrote:

Unquestionably this language puts humankind at the very dawn of creation. To reject this clear truth, one must contend that: (a) Christ knew the Universe was in existence billions of years prior to man, but ac-

commodating Himself to the ignorance of His generation, deliberately misrepresented the situation; or, (b) The Lord, living in pre-scientific times, was uninformed about the matter (despite the fact that He was there as Creator—John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Either of these allegations is a reflection upon the Son of God and is blasphemous (1989, pp. 25-26).

Furthermore, Paul affirmed the following:

For the invisible things of him **since the creation of the world** are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse (Romans 1:20, emp. added).

The apostle declared that **from the creation of the world** the invisible things of God have been: (a) clearly seen; and (b) perceived. The phrase, “since the creation of the world,” translates the Greek, *apo ktiseos kosmou*. As a preposition, *apo* is used “to denote the point from which something begins” (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 86). The term “world” is from the Greek, *kosmos*, and refers to “the orderly universe” (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 446). The term “perceived” translates the Greek *noeo*, which is used to describe rational, human intelligence. The phrase, “clearly seen” is an intensified form of *horao*, a word that “gives prominence to the discerning mind” (Thayer, 1962, p. 452). Both “perceived” and “clearly seen” are present tense forms, and as such denote “the continued manifestation of the being and perfections of God, by the works of creation from the beginning” (MacKnight, 1960, p. 58).

Who perceived the things that were made “from the beginning” of the creation? If no man was there for billions of years (because man “is a relative newcomer to the Earth”), who was observing—with human intelligence—these phenomena? There can be no doubt that Paul was teaching that **man** has existed since the creation of the world and has possessed the capacity to comprehend the truth regarding the existence of the Creator; accordingly, those who refuse to glorify Him are without excuse. It likewise is inexcusable for one who professes to believe the Bible as God’s inspired Word to wrest such verses merely to defer to evolutionary geology. Yet examples of that very thing are all too prevalent.

During my debate with Jack Wood Sears on the age of the Earth, I asked him to explain Christ's comments in Mark 10:6 and Matthew 19:4 that "**from the beginning of the creation**, male and female made he them." Astonishingly, Dr. Sears suggested that neither passage addressed the creation of the **world** but instead meant "from the time of the creation of **man and woman**." Were that the case, these passages would have the Lord saying, "From the beginning of the creation (of man and woman), man and woman created he them." The Son of God was not in the habit of talking in such nonsensical terms. Furthermore, Mark plainly wrote about "the beginning of **the creation**," not "**their creation**." Christ's point is crystal clear, especially when connected to Paul's comment in Romans 1:20-21 that someone with rational, **human** intelligence was "perceiving" the things that had been created. Riegle was right when he suggested: "It is amazing that men will accept long, complicated, imaginative theories and reject the truth given to Moses by the Creator Himself" (1962, p. 24).

"From the Blood of Abel"

In Luke 11:45-52, the account is recorded of the Lord rebuking the rebellious Jews of His day. He charged them with following in the footsteps of their ancestors, foretold the horrible destruction that was yet to befall them, and announced that upon them would come "the blood of all the prophets, which was shed **from the foundation of the world**." Then, with emphatic linguistic parallelism (so often characteristic of Hebrew expression), He added, "**from the blood of Abel** unto the blood of Zachariah." Jesus therefore placed the murder of Abel near the "foundation of the world." Granted, Abel's death occurred some years after the creation, but it was close enough to that event for the Lord to state that it was associated with "the foundation of the world." If the world came into existence several billion years before the first family, how could the shedding of human blood be declared by God's Son to extend back to the "foundation of the world"?

Those who opt for an old-Earth scenario believe, of course, that man is a "recent addition" to the Earth—a "johnny-come-lately" who has been here only 3 **million** years or

so out of an alleged Earth history of 4.6 **billion** years. Apparently, however, they are not obtaining their information from the same source as the prophet Isaiah who asked the people of his day, "Hath it not been told you **from the beginning**? Have ye not understood **from the foundations of the earth**?" (40:21, emp. added). Isaiah understood that man had been on the Earth "from the beginning" or, as he stressed, "from the foundations" of the Earth. Sad, is it not, that so many people today who claim to believe the Bible refuse to acknowledge that simple, scriptural fact?

How Long Were Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

On occasion, those who defend the concept of an ancient Earth suggest that it is impossible to know how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden and that untold years may have elapsed during that time period. Consider two popular arguments that frequently are offered in support of such a theory.

First, John Clayton has suggested that since a part of God's curse on Eve was that He was going to **multiply** her pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16), she **must** have given birth to numerous children in the garden or God's curse would have meant nothing to her. How could God "multiply" something that she never had experienced in the first place? Furthermore, Clayton has lamented, rearing children is a process that requires considerable time, thereby allowing for the possibility that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden for an extended period prior to being evicted after their sin. As Clayton has written: "Every evidence we have biblically indicates that mankind's beginning in the Garden of Eden **was not a short period** which involved one man and one woman" (1980, p. 5, emp. added).

The second argument (somewhat related to the first) suggests that Adam and Eve **must** have inhabited the garden for quite some time because after they left, it was said of Cain that "he builded a city" (Genesis 4: 17). To quote Clayton, that is something "which you cannot do with you and your wife" (1980, p. 5). In other words, Cain had to have a large enough family to help him build "a city." That, it is said, would have taken a lot of time.

Truth be told, every piece of biblical evidence we possess proves conclusively that mankind **could not have been in the garden very long**. Consider the following.

First, regardless of what defenders of an ancient Earth may **wish** were true, the simple fact of the matter is that the Bible sets an outer limit on the amount of time that man could have inhabited the Garden of Eden. Genesis 5:5 states clearly that "**all the days** that Adam lived were **930 years**." We know, of course, that "days" and "years" already were being counted by the time of Adam's creation because in Genesis 1:14 (day four of creation) God mentioned both in His discussion of their relationship to the heavenly bodies. Therefore, however long Adam and Eve may have been in the garden, one thing is for sure: they were not there for a time period that exceeded Adam's life span (930 years). Additionally, a certain portion of man's life was spent **outside** the Garden of Eden due to his sin against God—thereby reducing even further the portion of the 930 years that could have been spent in the garden setting.

Second, surely it is not inconsequential that **all** the children of Adam and Eve mentioned in the Bible were born **outside** the Garden of Eden. **Not a single conception or birth** is mentioned as having taken place while Adam and Eve lived in the garden (see Genesis 4:1 for the first mention of any conception or birth—only **after** the couple's expulsion from Eden). Follow closely the importance and logic of this argument, which may be stated as follows.

One of the commands given to Adam and Eve was that they "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth" (Genesis 1:28). In other words, Adam and Eve were to **reproduce**. But what is sin? Sin is: (a) **doing** what God said **not to do**; or (b) **not doing** what God said **to do**. Up until the time that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3: 6), had they sinned? No, they still were in a covenant relationship with God. Since that is the case, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that Adam and Eve were doing what God had commanded them to do—reproducing. Yet, I repeat, the only conceptions and births of which we have any record occurred **outside the garden!** In other words, apparently Adam and Eve were not even in the garden long enough for Eve to conceive, much less give birth.

Third, while the Bible does not provide a **specific** time regarding how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden, it could not have been very long because Christ Himself, referring to the curse of death upon the human family, said that the devil “was a murderer **from the beginning**” (John 8:44). Satan and his ignominious band of outlaws (“sons of the evil one”—Matthew 13:38) have worked their ruthless quackery on mankind from the moment the serpent met Eve in the Garden of Eden. When he and his cohorts rebelled and “kept not their proper habitation,” they were cast from the heavenly portals to be “kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). Satan’s anger at having been defeated fueled his determination to strike back in revenge.

And who better to serve as the recipient of his indignation than man—the only creature in the Universe made “in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26-27)? As Rex A. Turner, Sr. observed: “Satan cannot attack God directly, thus he employs various methods to attack man, God’s master creation” (1980, p. 89). What sweet revenge—despoiling the zenith of God’s creative genius! Little wonder that the apostle Peter described Satan as an adversary who, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Now—knowing what the Scriptures tell us about Satan’s origin, attitude, and mission—is it sensible to suggest that he would take his proverbial time, and twiddle his figurative thumbs, while he allowed Adam and Eve to revel in the covenant relationship they enjoyed with their Maker (read Genesis 3:8 about how God walked with them in the garden “in the cool of the day”)?

Would he simply “leave them alone for a long period of time” so that they could conceive, give birth to, and rear children in the luscious paradise known as the Garden of Eden? Is this how a hungry, stalking lion would view its prey—by watching admiringly from afar, allowing it thousands (or millions!) of years of fulfilled joy and affording it time to conceive, give birth to, and raise a family? Hardly—which is why Christ described Satan as a murderer “from the beginning.” Satan was angry and filled with a thirst for revenge. What better way to satisfy that thirst than by introducing sin into God’s otherwise perfect world?

What may be said, then, about the suggestion that Adam and Eve must have been in the garden for an extended time period because God said that He was going to “multiply” Eve’s pain. How could He “multiply” something that she never had experienced? This quibble can be answered quite easily. Does a person have to “experience” something before that something can be “multiplied”? Suppose I said, “I’m going to give you \$100.” You eagerly stick out your hand to receive the \$100 bill that I am holding in mine. But, as you reach, I pull back my hand and say, “No, I’ve changed my mind; I’m going to give you \$1,000 instead!” Did you actually have to possess or “experience” the \$100 bill before I could increase it to \$1,000? Of course not! The fact that God said He intended to “multiply” Eve’s pain in childbirth does not mean necessarily that Eve had to have experienced **some** pain before God’s decree that she would experience **more** pain. God’s point was merely this: “Eve, you were going to experience pain in childbirth, but because of your sin, now you will experience even more pain.”

The fact that Eve never had experienced **any** childbirth pain up to that point does not mean that she could not experience **even more** pain later as a part of her penalty for having sinned against God.

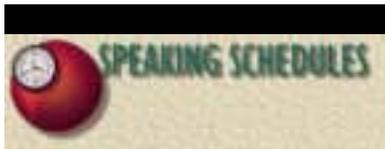
Lastly, what about John Clayton’s idea that Adam and Eve must have been in the Garden for an extended period of time because when they left Cain and his wife “built a city” (Genesis 4:17). Clayton has lamented that this is something “which you cannot do with you and your wife” (1980, p. 5). Such an observation would be correct, of course, **if** the city under consideration were a modern metropolis. But that is not the case here.

The Hebrew word for city is quite broad in its meaning and may refer to anything from a sprawling village to a tiny encampment. Literally, the term means “place of look-out, especially as it was fortified.” In discussing Genesis 4:17, Old Testament commentator John Willis observed: “However, a ‘city’ is not necessarily a large, impressive metropolis, but may be a small unimposing village of relatively few inhabitants” (1979, p. 155). Apply some common sense here. What would it be **more likely** for the Bible to suggest that Cain and his wife constructed (considering who they were and where they were living)—a bustling metropolis or a Bedouin tent city. To ask is to answer, is it not? To this very day, Bedouin tent cities are commonplace in that particular area of the world. And, as everyone will admit, two boy scouts can erect a tent, so it does not strain credulity to suggest that likely Cain and his wife were able to accomplish such a task as well.

The Doctrine of Apparent Age

On occasion, the comment is overheard, “But the Earth **looks so old**.” There are at least two responses that might be made to such a statement. First, one might ask, “Compared to what; what does a **young** Earth look like?” Who among us has anything with which to compare? Second, we should not be surprised if certain methods in science appear to support the idea of an ancient Earth. Why? The answer lies in the “doctrine of apparent age” (also known as the “doctrine of mature creation”).

This concept states that when God created “heaven, and earth, the sea, and all



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that in them is” (Exodus 20:11), they were made perfect, complete, and ready for habitation by mankind and the multiple forms of plant and animal life. God did not create **immature** forms (although He certainly could have done so, had He wished), but **mature** ones. Rather than creating an acorn, for example, He created an oak. Rather than creating an egg, He created a chicken. Rather than creating Adam and Eve as infants, He created them as post-pubescent beings. We know this to be true because one of the commands God gave each living thing shortly after its creation was that it should reproduce “after its kind.” This very command, in fact, was given to Adam and Eve while they still were in the Garden of Eden, prior to their sin and expulsion.

How old were Adam and Eve two seconds after their creation? They were two seconds old. How old were the plants and animals two seconds after their creation? They were two seconds old. But how old did all of these two-second-old people, plants, and animals **look** like they were? Trevor Major has commented:

So Adam, for example, had the look and the capability of a full-grown man on the first Sabbath, even though he had lived only one day. Thus, according to the doctrine of mature creation, all living things were created in a mature state, with only the **appearance** of age (1989, p. 16, emp. in orig.).

It is important to realize that the initial creation had **two** ages—one **literal**, one **apparent**. It **literally** may have been one day old, two days old, three days old, and so on. But it **appeared** to be much older.

The biblical record provides additional information concerning the accuracy of the doctrine of apparent age. In Genesis 1:14, God told Moses that the heavenly bodies (e.g., Sun, Moon, stars) were to be “for signs and for seasons, for days and for years.” In order for them to be useful to man for the designation of signs, seasons, days, and years, such heavenly bodies **must have been visible**. Thus, when God created them He made their light rays already visible from the Earth. The psalmist exclaimed: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (19:1). There was, therefore, **purpose** behind God’s mature creation.

First, the Earth was prepared in a mature state so that man would find it suitable

for habitation. Since Christ specifically stated that man and woman had been on the Earth “since the beginning of the creation” (Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6), it was critical “from the beginning” that the Earth be “finished.” Second, once man found himself in such a home (called “very good”—denoting perfection—in Genesis 1:31), it was only right to give honor and glory to the Creator Who designed and built such a magnificent edifice. This explains why Paul, in Romans 1:20ff., suggested that God’s “everlasting power and divinity” had been seen by mankind “from the creation of the world,” and why those who refused to honor God would be “without excuse.”

Even the miracles of the Bible reflect the principle of “apparent age.” When Christ fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21), the young boy present on that occasion had but a few loaves and fishes. Yet Christ “multiplied” them to feed over 5,000 men alone. Major addressed this concept when he wrote:

Thousands of loaves were distributed for which the barley had not been sown, harvested, or milled, and which had never been mixed into dough and baked in an oven. Equally amazing, thousands of dried fishes were handed out which neither had grown from an egg nor been caught in a fishermen’s net. Everything was there in a prepared form, ready to eat by the recipients of this great wonder.

The miracle of creation was also achieved in a relative instant, producing an effect which could have only a supernatural cause. In the first chapter of Genesis, God created trees and grasses, not just their seeds. He created birds which could already fly, not eggs or even chicks. He created fish which could already swim, not fish eggs. He created cattle, not calves. And He created man and woman, not boy and girl. Speaking to these animals, and to these people, God commanded: “Be fruitful and multiply” (1:22,28). Notice that the plants and animals began to multiply according to their own kind almost straightaway (1:11,24). Immature organisms could not have reproduced, and in any case, would have perished in the absence of their adult forms (1989, 27[10]:16).

The moment God created matter itself, would it not have appeared “mature”? If God had created Adam as a baby, how could He have made a baby that did not **look** like it had gone through a nine-month gestation period? If He had created an acorn, how could He have created an acorn that did not **look** like it had fallen from a mighty oak? Did God create the Earth “mature”? How could He have done otherwise?

However, we must be careful not to abuse this concept. Some have asked if the Creator might have placed fossils (or fossil fuels) in the Earth to make it “appear” ancient. Such an idea should be rejected because it is an indictment of God—Who never would try to “trick” or “fool” man in such a way. Nor would He ever lie (Titus 1:2). If we see things in the Earth like fossils, fossil fuels, etc., we naturally (and rightly) assume that these are the results of real plants and/or animals that actually lived. It will not do for us to say, “God just put them there,” for such a suggestion makes God deceptive, which He is not. As Major has stated: “Tactics of confusion and deception hardly belong to a Creator Who would have humanity discern Him by His creation (Romans 1:20)” [1989, 27[10]:16].

Others have suggested that if God created things to appear older than they really are, that is deceptive on the face of it. Thus, by definition the doctrine of apparent age makes God a liar and should be rejected on that count alone. However, such an accusation ignores the fact that **God told us what He did!** Anyone who examines Genesis 1-2 can read within those chapters God’s methodology. In fact, He made certain that we were told how the Earth and its inhabitants came into existence. Perhaps—just perhaps—if God had not told us what He did, **then** He might be accused of deception. But no one can accuse God (justifiably) of such despicable behavior because His Word explains His actions. He did not hide the real facts from us but, quite the contrary, went to great lengths to reveal them.

Some have suggested that one of the most difficult questions relating to the doctrine of apparent age has to do with the starlight that is seen from the Earth. The argument usually goes something like this. We know that light travels at a speed slightly in excess of 186,000 miles per second. The

time it takes light to travel one year is referred to as a light-year. Yet we are able to see light from stars that are millions of light-years away. How can this be if the Earth is young (with an age measured in thousands, not billions, of years)? Of course, a partial answer lies in the fact that God created the light from the original heavenly bodies already en route and visible to the Earth's inhabitants. Without that light, the night sky would lack patterns necessary for the signs, seasons, days, and years specified so clearly in Genesis 1:14, and mankind would not have been able to see God's "glory and handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

Other issues may be involved as well, a discussion of which (e.g., the possibility that the speed of light has diminished over time, etc.) has been provided by various writers (see: Norman and Setterfield, 1987; Major, 1987; *Ex Nihilo*, 1984; Humphreys, 1994). The reader interested in a discussion of these matters is referred to these sources and others that they may recommend. Such a discussion is beyond the purview of this article, however, since it has to do more with scientific matters than biblical.

CONCLUSION

There are many people who accept unreservedly the Bible's teaching on matters of both a spiritual and a physical nature. They do not believe in evolution, and defend as genuine the Bible's instruction regarding such topics as its own inspiration, Christ's deity, and the importance of the church. They acknowledge that God "has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). And, to the very best of their ability, they live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). Yet when it comes to the Bible's teaching on the age of the Earth, they simply shrug their shoulders (as if they do not quite know what to do with the information) and are content to take a somewhat "agnostic" stance in regard to the biblical information on this crucial topic. Apparently, they are undecided about what to do with the Bible's teachings in this area, especially since "science" seems to be offering them a conclusion diametrically opposed to the one dictated by the Bible. In the end, for whatever reason(s), "science" wins as they set aside biblical instruction in favor of current scientific theory.

But why is this the case? The Bible **does** address the topic of the age of the Earth, as our discussion here amply documents. If a person is willing to accept the Bible's instructions on its own inspiration, God's existence, Christ's deity, the need to live a decent, honest, moral life, and hundreds of other topics that deal not just with godliness but with "**life and godliness**," why, then, can that same person not accept the Bible's simple, straightforward teaching on the age of the Earth? Is one set of instructions any more difficult to believe than the other? Our plea is for such Bible believers to be consistent and to abandon the concept of an ancient Earth that is so foreign to the Scriptures. Accept **all** that the Bible has to say—including its plain statements and clear implications regarding the age of the Earth.

No doubt there also are many Bible believers who simply do not know **what** to do regarding the problem of the age of the Earth. They "lean" toward belief in an old Earth, but only because they never have stopped to consider that one of the **the most compelling reasons for belief in an old Earth is to legitimize the concept of evolution** (without an ancient planet, evolution obviously is impossible). But were someone to ask, "Do you believe in evolution?," their answer likely would be, "No, I do not." Then why believe in an old Earth? Why not simply examine what the Bible says regarding the age of the Earth and accept it forthwith? On occasion, the person who starts out conceding an ancient Earth eventually ends up in the evolutionists' camp. At some point, he or she is led to think: If the Earth really is billions of years old, then perhaps evolution has been going on for all that time after all.

How old is the Earth? Biblically speaking, it is **five days older than man!** Relatively speaking, it is quite young—with an age measured in thousands, not billions, of years. Yet even some Christians have ridiculed such an idea. For example, in his book, *Prepare to Answer: A Defense of the Christian Faith*, Rubel Shelly has suggested that "Few would argue that the earth is 'only about 6,000 years old'...." and that such a position is "not held by responsible apologists" (1990, p. 61). I suggest, however, that such a position **is** held by "responsible apologists" because the Bible is factual in

its clear statements and implied deductions regarding the Earth and man's history on it. Faithful Christians should not be stampeded into accepting the compromising views of evolutionists—or those sympathetic with them.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

ANNOUNCING: THREE MORE VOLUMES IN THE “SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE SERIES”

Last month, I announced the new Apologetics Press “Scripture and Science Series” and introduced you to the first three books in that series. This month, as promised, I would like to bring to your attention three additional volumes.

The fourth book in the new series, *My Sovereign, My Sin, My Salvation*, is a 72-page discussion of man’s alienation from God, his need for Heaven’s mercy and grace, the evidence for the deity of Christ as mankind’s Savior, Jehovah’s all-compassing plan for man’s salvation, and the singularity/uniqueness of Christ’s divinely designed church. If you would like a better personal understanding of the biblical story of your Sovereign, your sin, and your salvation, this book can provide it. And if you are searching for a volume to present to a friend or neighbor in order to help them become a Christian, I think you will find that this book is exactly what you are looking for. Its calm, non-confrontational, and non-threatening tone explains God’s solution to man’s predicament in a kind yet scriptural manner. The book is an exceptional evangelistic tool in which you won’t be disappointed. [\$4.95 + \$1.25 s/h]

The fifth volume, *The Global Flood of Noah*, bears the same title as our 1995 volume on the same subject but is a completely new work. While it covers many of the same topics as the older edition, it has been rewritten in a more professional tone and includes updated material as well. Within its 61 pages, it discusses information regarding the biblical Flood as a historical event, including reasons for the Flood, attacks on the Flood account, the global nature of the Flood,

the size of the ark, the depth/duration of the Flood, the gathering of the animals, etc. While it certainly is not as in-depth a treatment of the subject as the classic text, *The Genesis Flood* (by Whitcomb and Morris), it helps provide answers to many questions that arise regarding this important biblical topic.

Teenagers, college students, and young adults will find it especially faith building. [\$4.95 + \$1.25 s/h]

The sixth title, *The Christian and Medical Ethics*, is a completely revised, newly updated 1999 edition of our 1993 book by the same title. Within its 61 pages, it examines the current controversy raging around modern-day genetic engineering (e.g., artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, etc.). It includes the latest, most up-to-date information on cloning as well, and discusses the biblical, scientific, and moral/ethical implications of available procedures. This book is one that can help answer the troubling questions with which elders, preachers, and especially potential parents so often struggle. [\$4.95 + \$1.25 s/h]

Next month I plan to announce an additional volume (currently at our printer’s) and then another the month after that. These three new books, however, are available now and may be purchased as a set at the special price of only \$12 [\$1.75 s/h]. Order all six books for \$24 [\$2.50 s/h]. Each has a beautiful, full-color, laminated cover and eye-pleasing type style. What a wonderful (and inexpensive!) gift, or addition to a personal library, these books would make. To order by credit card, call us at 800/234-8558.

— Bert Thompson

