

# On the Gap theory

## Genesis 1

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There is a modern version of the gap theory that has replaced the original gap theory. It proposes that that the 6 days in Genesis are literal days in which God performed creative acts, but that there are gaps of millions of years between the days. It is more commonly called the “day-age theory”. The belief is that this bridges the “gap” between scientific knowledge and the inerrancy of the Word of God. It certainly does not achieve this and is a biblically flawed, logically flawed and scientifically flawed solution! This theory has nothing to do with the earlier “gap theory” that Darby and Kelly promoted. Of course, the earlier “gap theory” was also flawed, but I would like to emphasize that there is no link between the first “gap theory” and the modern one.

There are those who appeal to Darby/Kelly/Grant/Booth etc. to promote the modern “day-age theory” circulating amongst Christians. This is deceptive and misleading because the modern “day-age theory” is fundamentally different from the gap theory of times-gone-by. No Christian intellectuals pushing old earth views today believe in the original gap theory! Most people who are not well versed in the subject would know the difference, and could easily be led to believe that the early brethren discounted a global flood (the day-age theory promotes a local flood) and allowed for theistic evolution between Genesis 1:3-31. That's what it is really about now. The modern reasoning teaches that disbelieving a global flood and allowing for theistic evolution takes some of the (self-inflicted) reproach of Christianity away and allows us to reach the world with the gospel more effectively. That is flawed and dangerous thinking!

On a personal note, although I believe in a young earth, it is a non-issue to me if one wants to read billions of years between Gen 1:1 and 1:2 WITHOUT involving any biological life in those billions of years. (Gen 1 doesn't allow for biology there and there is no scientific evidence for it either). I guarantee you though, that anyone who feels they need to teach billions of years between Gen 1:1 and 1:2, need it because they want to allow for some form of biological evolutionary dogma. The crazy thing is that theistic evolution requires far more faith than the revelation that God brought about a mature creation in six days! All modern discoveries contradict the theory of organisms slowly becoming more complex over time due to a massive accumulation of beneficial accidents.

Regarding my comment that I personally do not care if one believes billions of years exist between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2 as far as the rocks are concerned... I should be careful to affirm Exodus 20:11 "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them". My point remains however, that nobody is interested in billion-year-old rocks... the issue is: are there million and billion-year-old fossils?!

The real scientific challenge with an approximate 6000-year history of time is not a young earth, but the fact that we can see stars that are millions of light years away. Remember though, that a light year is not a measure of time, but a measure of distance. In addition to this, there are in fact many possibilities to reconcile "long ages" with "in six days", my favorite authors on this being John Hartnett and Russell Humphreys. There are some funny quotes on the reliability of cosmological models in general... one of them goes like this:

'You have to understand that first there is speculation, then there is wild speculation, and then there is cosmology.'

Harris, M, 'Stephen Hawking: Genius or Pretender', in Focus on Science, The Weekend Australian, 4-5 July 1992, p. 19

The basic requirement for a cosmological model is that it fit the evidence with as few rescuing devices as possible and that it be internally consistent. There are hundreds of ways to achieve this! The "big bang" theory, by the way, has no fewer than 3 major rescuing devices... items invented out of necessity to keep it internally consistent even though there is no evidence for them. It also has some very arbitrary starting assumptions to ensure that planet earth cannot be said to be in a preferred location in the universe!

As far as the original gap theory goes: I see an opportunity to let the teachings of the early brethren unify rather than divide.

The reason for the “gap theory” of the early brethren is far different than those who promote modern “day-age theories”. The early brethren correctly saw that deep time did not fit into Gen 1:3-31. They also correctly saw that scripture is not in competition with scientific facts. They did not correctly perceive that the concept of deep time is not based on science but rather worldview/philosophy. Therefore, they saw the need to find an extra-biblical solution to harmonize the "scientific fact of deep time" with the scriptures.

We want to point out the right motives and high view of scripture held by those who promoted the original gap theory. The problem is that incorrect assumptions about the ideas of fallible men (i.e. that deep time in the geological record is a fact) led them (the early brethren) to incorrect interpretations of Scripture in an effort to maintain harmony between the two. The mistake was to try to harmonize man’s ideas that were promoted as facts with Scripture! With the modern day-age theory, this is still the same problem, however, now the teaching is that the gaps are between creation days... which the early brethren would never support. In other words, the original gap theory *adds* an extra-biblical theory to Scripture in an attempt to harmonize with “science” while the modern day-age theory is to *change the method of interpreting Scripture* to harmonize with “science”.

Here are a few more points:

1. The early brethren taught a gap theory out of respect for what they believed to be scientific knowledge (as opposed to worldview/interpretation), that they wanted to reconcile with a straightforward reading of Gen 1. That's why they supported an (incorrect) extra-biblical gap theory. The modern day-age theory reads deep time into Gen 1 by completely changing the natural reading of the passage. It makes scientific knowledge (incorrectly attributed as such) prerequisite to understanding Gen 1. It makes knowledge (man’s philosophies) the basis for understanding God's Word instead of God's Word being the basis for knowledge! The early brethren did not have this kind of thought process when they supported the (incorrect) extra biblical gap theory. Granted, they did try to find support for their theory within the Scriptures but they always tried to show (albeit unsuccessfully) that their interpretation fit naturally with the Scriptures and that the interpretation did not flow from the preconceived idea (although in reality it did!). The early brethren are a warning to us in this... we all tend to do this and must be constantly reminded not to do this! The early brethren also failed to carefully consider the theological consequences of the gap theory. (Death before sin).

2. The early brethren had no understanding of the catastrophic nature of the global flood. In his book In The Beginning, (p 15) Kelly very incorrectly states the physical effects of the flood were minimal: “No doubt the deluge had the deepest moral significance, and is thus unique, because the human race, save those in the ark, was then swept away. But physically its traces were superficial compared with those far more ancient convulsions...”
3. No schools teach the original gap theory as plausible anymore. It doesn't overcome the reproach of accepting a 6-day creation. It is not useful to liberal scholars, it does not stand up to a textual analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures and it is very weak at explaining the natural evidence. Remember that the early brethren affirmed that Gen 1:3-31 records a 6 day (6 consecutive complete rotations of the earth) creation and they did not endorse day-age theories.
4. We have confidence in God's Word as the basis for all faith and knowledge. The Bible is not a science book, but it can totally give us correct assumptions in scientific endeavors... for example, assuming a global flood can lead us to make good scientific hypothesis and predictions. We care about correct thinking and recognize that the modern day-age theory is a completely different thing from the gap theory.
5. No teaching of man threatens God's Word and the day-age theory is a poor attempt to defend God's Word. Although many embrace the day-age theory in order to harmonize God's Word with science, in reality it opposes both!
6. We are not overly critical of the early brethren – in fact, we appreciate their commitment to holding God's Word above everything else. However, they were wrong to accept doctrines of man as scientific fact and then try to fit that into the Scriptures. That is the same problem we have today! We should learn from this mistake.
7. Finally, it is ok not to know everything! In fact, it is far wiser to recognize what we cannot know with certainty than to exalt an interpretation to the status of truth. We often care more about how our answers are perceived than if they are correct and true!

Here is an article of interest: <https://creation.com/gap-theory-revisited>

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