

# “Genesis 1:1–2”

This article is from the “Among Friends” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website (churchofgodbigandy.com). It was posted for the weekend of Jan. 21, 2023.

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BIG SANDY, Texas—At our Bible study on Wednesday night, I gave a presentation titled “Genesis 1:1-2.”

## **Recent video**

At the Bible study on Jan. 11, I showed the beginning of a video titled *Is Genesis History?* (We watched about 30 minutes of a video that lasts 1 hour and 44 minutes.)

Here were my three main positive conclusions from the video.

- The video used geology to conclude that the Noah flood was a global flood.
- The video used geology to accept creation instead of evolution.
- The video concluded that the Genesis 1 creation occurred in six days.

(The video also supported a “young earth” scenario—which was interesting, but not my current perspective.)

## **Evaluating the ‘gap theory’**

In the Jan. 18 Bible study, I decided to discuss Genesis 1:1-2. That decision led me to talk about the “gap theory.”

When I attended a Bible college from 1970 to 1974, I learned the gap theory concerning Genesis 1:1-2.

For 53 years, I have believed the gap theory—although it has not been a major subject of examination or discussion since then (because it is theory that does not necessarily impact my daily life).

- History records that Dutch theologian Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) introduced the theory and that Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) popularized the theory from 1814.
- Many people value the theory as a means to reconcile the Bible with fossils.
- According to the theory, there was a creation in Genesis 1:1 and a re-creation in Genesis 1:2-31.
- The theory claims that spiritual battles and widespread ruin occurred in Genesis 1:2—causing a need for a re-creation.

## Let's read the verse

If we want to discover how theologians used a verse to establish the gap theory, it would seem appropriate to begin by reading the verse in the King James Version.

Genesis 1:2—"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Where did the theologians come up with the theory of re-creation?

To many people, the description merely seemed like God beginning the creative process.

However, there were some phrases that influenced the theologians to develop their theory.

- "Was"
- "Without form" and "void"

## Claiming earth became

The first main proof of the gap theory concerns the Hebrew word *hayah*, which is translated "was" in Genesis 1:2.

To many people, the straight reading of the verse is that the elements were ready for creation.

However, to the believers of the gap theory, verse 2 talked about ruin and re-creation.

Where do they get that perspective?

They believe that the Hebrew word *hayah* (which is translated "was") should be translated "became."

It is true that the Hebrew word *hayah* is translated "became" in various locations in the Bible. Following are a few examples.

- Genesis 2:7—Man "became" a living soul.
- Genesis 2:10—Rivers "became" into four heads.
- Genesis 3:22—Man is "become" as one of us.

*Hayah* is certainly translated hundreds of times as a form of "became."

But *hayah* is also translated 525 times as "was."

## Tohu and bohu

The second main proof is that the Hebrew words *tohu* and *bohu* found in Genesis 1:2 are also found in other parts of the Bible.

The words without form (*tohu*) and void (*bohu*) mentioned in Genesis 1:2 are also found in Jeremiah 4:23—where the earth was traumatized because of God's fierce anger (verses 23-26).

It is a historical fact when people recognize that Jeremiah 4:23-26 is talking about judgment and ruin.

But it is a theory when people seek to connect Jeremiah 4:23-26 with Genesis 1:2.

What about Isaiah 45:18?

The word *tohu* (translated "in vain") is also found in Isaiah 45:18—where the author said that the heavens and the earth were not created in vain (or many would say "in chaos.")

To the believer of the gap theory who leans toward the idea that the earth became chaotic in Genesis 1:2, this verse in Isaiah confirms their theory.

But is that the best conclusion to draw from Isaiah 45:18?

Isaiah 45:18—"For thus says the Lord . . . 'I am the Lord, and there is no other.'"

This verse is focusing upon the wonderful Lord Who completed the creation.

Have you ever noticed the six wonderful descriptions of the creation listed in this verse?

- "the Lord Who created the heavens"
- "the Lord Who is God"
- "the Lord Who formed the earth and made it"
- "the Lord Who has established it"
- "the Lord Who did not create it in vain"
- "the Lord Who formed it to be inhabited"

It is a fact that Isaiah 45:18 is focusing upon a great creation.

It is a theory to propose that Isaiah 45:18 is referring to a chaotic interruption—as hypothesized for Genesis 1:2.

What does the Bible say?

How many Bible translations are there to support the gap theory?

Let's look at Genesis 1:2 from many Bible translations.

The first example uses the English word became in it.

New Messianic Version Bible—"And the earth became without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep . . ."

But the number of reputable versions of the Bible that use the word was is overwhelming.

**King James Version**—"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . ."

**New King James Version**—"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep . . ."

**Orthodox Jewish Bible**—"And the earth was tohu vavohu (without form, and void); and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . ."

**The Complete Jewish Bible**—"The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep . . ."

**Hebrew Names Version**—"Now the erez was formless and empty. Darkness was on the surface of the deep . . ."

**The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text**—"Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . ."

**Interlinear Bible: Hebrew, Greek, English**—"And the earth being without form and empty, and darkness on the face of the deep . . ."

**God's Word Translation**—"The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep water . . ."

### **Beware of inserting scriptures**

Let's take a moment to recognize some of the scriptures that people seek to insert into Genesis 1:2.

- Isaiah 14:12-14
- Ezekiel 28:11-18
- Luke 10:18
- Jude 6
- Revelation 12:4
- Revelation 12:7-9

Someone could ask: "Do you believe the messages of those verses?"

My reply: "I believe that those verses contain important truth. However, inserting those verses between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 is certainly an opinion and theory."

### **Ears to hear**

I want to conclude this article by reminding Bible students about the potential danger of inserting scriptures into Genesis 1:2.

- Jeremiah 23:16
- Jeremiah 23:21
- Revelation 22:18
- Revelation 22:19