

WHAT IS THE GAP THEORY?

Although there are variations, the basic teaching of the gap theory is that millions of years ago God created the universe and everything in it as recorded in Genesis 1:1. Sometime during the subsequent millions of years, Lucifer (i.e., Satan) rebelled and was thrown to earth. This resulted in Lucifer's flood, which destroyed all plant and animal life on earth, thus producing the fossil record in the rock layers.

At the same time as this flood, the earth was plunged into darkness and thus became "without form and void" as recorded in Genesis 1:2. The gap theory teaches that the fossils found in the earth's crust are relics of the originally perfect world that God created, which was supposedly destroyed before the six literal days of creation (or re-creation) recorded in Genesis 1:3–31.

This view was proposed by Thomas Chalmers in the early 1800s to accommodate the idea of millions of years. It has been popularized by resources such as the Scofield Reference Bible. Typically, the age of the earth and universe are left to "science" to determine, but biological evolution is rejected.

WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE CREATION?

Progressive Creation is a relatively recent idea that seeks to embrace the big bang as the origin of the universe and allow for the geological evolution of the earth, but rejects the biological evolution of life on earth. This view suggests that God created life in spurts and allowed many species to go extinct and then to be recreated in slightly different forms over billions of years. The days of creation were actually long overlapping periods of time during which God created different life forms.

Proponents of this view consider nature to be the "sixty-seventh book of the Bible" and look to that "book" to teach them about human origins and the history of the earth and universe. The rock layers contain a record of the history of life on earth, including pre-humans who did not have a spirit, yet strongly resembled modern humans. The rocks also contain evidence of death, disease, and suffering. The Flood was a local event that is referred to as "universal" because it impacted all humans on the earth at the time.

The view has been popularized by Hugh Ross and the organization Reasons to Believe and is supported by several Christian leaders.

WHAT IS THEISTIC EVOLUTION?

This view is the broadest and includes so many diverse ideas that it is hard to define strictly. All would agree that the secular explanations of the age of the universe and earth are accurate and that the Flood was a local event. All would agree that life on earth has evolved from simple organisms, but some believe God created that first spark of life while others believe it happened "naturally" according to the laws God ordained for the universe. Some would accept that God had no intervening role in the evolution of life while others see God guiding the process at important steps.

Most would agree that humans evolved from previous hominids and God "injected" a spirit into man at some point. Others believe all life was allowed to evolve and at a certain point God specially created Adam and Eve as the first humans. Regardless, the disease, death, and struggle to survive were part of God's original plan for the creation. The days of Genesis 1 are viewed as poetic expressions of the vast ages of earth's history (a day-age interpretation) and there was never a globe-covering Flood.

The day-age view was popularized by Hugh Miller in the early 1800s at the same time Chalmers was espousing the Gap Theory. As Darwin introduced ideas on biological evolution, those explanations were incorporated into the day-age views and have continued today. Organizations like the Discovery Institute and BioLogos sponsor teachers who teach various forms of theistic evolution.

Print one copy and cut apart.