



Conducted by
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The following question comes from a congregation which, in its Bible study, has been looking at Genesis 1; 1-2.

"Did God create the heavens and the earth millions of years ago and let them become 'Without form and void'. Then, the Spirit of God moved, and we have the world today?"

There then follows a second question:

"We wondered how Dinosaurs fit into Creation, if we do not have the millions of years".

A question along similar lines came in about two years ago, but, since it is possible that some of the readers of the "S.S." missed the answer I gave then, we shall look at the passage again.

(1) THE 'GAP' THEORY

We should notice exactly what **Genesis 1:1** tells us.

It does *not* tell us that God created the heavens and the earth, and then allowed them to 'become without form and void'. Instead, we have a complete sentence making a positive and emphatic statement about their origin. It states, simply and clearly, that the 'heavens and the earths,' - an expression representing everything that exists - were *created by God*. That is how they came into being.

The word '*created*' is the significant word, because '*bara*', used in this chapter, means '*to bring into existence something which has not previously existed*'. Furthermore in the scriptures it is used 33 times for 'create' and is used exclusively of the actions of God. There are just two occasions where, in the A. V., it has been rendered 'make', but even there it would have been more accurately translated 'create', (see **Num. 16:30**, and **Psalms 89:47**). In fact, modern translations have replaced it with 'create'.

'*Create*' is very different from the word '*made*'. One can '*make*' a thing out of pre-existent material, but God first '*created*' the matter - brought the 'building blocks' into

existence, so to speak - and began to produce the ordered system which we know as *'the heavens and the earth'*.

Notice, also, that God created this material *'in the beginning'*, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that, before this, matter did not exist. The phrase, *'in the beginning'*, has even been called *'the dateless date'*, because it is impossible to go farther back than *'the beginning'*.

Verse 2 then tells us that, at the time of its creation, *the material*, to which God Himself later gave the name *'Earth'*, (see v.10), was, as described in the Hebrew text, *'tohu wa bohu'* - (an interesting play on words!). The A.V. translated this as *'without form and void'* and both words mean *'empty'*, and describe their state of *'emptiness'*.

How long God allowed this state of emptiness to continue - or *if* He allowed it to continue at all - we cannot say. There is nothing in the Bible that will permit us to be dogmatic on the matter. But, in order to account for the fossil record, and, especially, to make room for the Dinosaurs mentioned in the question, attempts have been made to fix a gap of millions of years between verses 1 and 2.

Sometimes, in order to prevent the Bible from being called *'unscientific'*, clever religious people have gone out of their way to accommodate the scientists; or, at the very least, they have tried to *'harmonize'* the Bible and *'Science'*.

We have a case in point before us right now.

Thomas Chalmers, was a very gifted Scottish clergyman, born in 1780, who is probably best remembered as the man who was largely responsible for the founding of the *'Free Church of Scotland'*.

Dr. Chalmers was a great orator, a mathematician and a chemist. And, as a writer he produced a work entitled *'Institutes of Theology'* which ran to 34 volumes!

In his attempts to reconcile the Biblical account of Creation with what was claimed to be *'science'*, he produced the *'Catastrophe Theory'*, which assumed that, in the time-gap which he assumed should be placed between verse 1 and 2, there had been an *earlier* *'Creation'*, which had been destroyed by some sort of disaster destroying all life - including the Dinosaurs which he thought roamed the earth at that time. According to the theory, it was this *'catastrophe'* which, besides killing the dinosaurs, also produced the fossils.

Well, since there is no mention of anything like this in the Bible, how did Thomas Chalmers support his theory?

1. He did it by going to the 2nd verse of Gen. 1, *'and the earth was without form and void'*, and *altering the translation*.

He said that the world *'was'* which, in Hebrew, is *'havah'*, should really be *'hayah'*, which means *'became'*. With Dr. Chalmers' alteration the verse comes out as, *'the earth became waste and empty'*.

Unfortunately for his theory, there is *no linguistic evidence or authority* for making this change in the text, and it is rejected by biblical scholars.

Linguistically, the word *'was'*, in the 2nd verse, is a *'substantive'* and expresses time. In other words, it refers to all the time during which the *'Earth'* existed as a formless mass.

2. Dr. Chalmers also turned to verse 28, which, in the A.V., reads, *'replenish' the 'earth'*, and he took this to mean, *'re-fill'*, That is, *'fill the earth again'*.

But the Hebrew word *'male'* does not mean *'fill again'*. It means *'fill up'*. God commanded those whom he had created to *'Be fruitful and multiply and fill up the earth'*. God commanded the first human beings to populate the planet which he had prepared for them to occupy.

Still no evidence for the *'Catastrophe Theory'*!

3. Dr. Chalmers sought support from Isaiah 45:18, which tells us that God *'created*

the heavens and formed the earth! He pointed out that the verse continues to say that God *'did not create it a chaos'*. But the good doctor should have continued with the rest of that verse; *'He formed it to be inhabited'*. Bear in mind that Isaiah had not heard of Dr. Chalmers' theory! The prophet, speaking on behalf of God, is referring to the earth on which we live today. God did not create it to remain empty (*'tohu'*). This, of course, is backed up by **Gen. 1:28**.

(2) WHAT ABOUT THE DINOSAURS?

If there was no 'former creation' during which Dinosaurs roamed the earth, when did they exist?

Well, **Gen. 1:21** offers us something to think about.

On the fourth day God created *'great sea monsters'*, R.S.V. Here the Hebrew word used is *'tannin'*, which describes any *'long'* creature, and refers to sea monsters, dragons, serpents, and lizards.

Since the word 'dinosaur' comes from *'deino saurus'* and means *'terrible lizard'*, **verse 21** has been described as referring to the 'Saurian' age - the age of the lizards.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'saurian' as referring to the *"order of lizards including crocodiles, alligators, and extinct kinds, such as Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus"*.

THE 'DAY' OF CREATION

Well, perhaps the 'days' of Creation were vast geological periods and not 24 hour days?

Not so! It is true that the word *'yom'* = *'day'*, is used in several ways in the Bible and was used to refer to an indefinite period of time, as, for instance, *'the day of temptation in the wilderness'*. See **Psalms 95:8**, and **Isa. 2:11**.

But, remember that the account of Creation repeatedly says, *'And there was evening and there was morning one day'*. And again, *'So it was evening and there was morning a second day...'*

Brother J.B. Rotherham's literal rendering of the Hebrew text gives us this translation.

Again; when the Israelites were commanded to *'remember the Sabbath day'*, they were given a reason. *'For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and the seventh (day) is a Sabbath'*.

The rule to follow when determining the use of the word *'yom'*, is quite simple.

When *'day'* is preceded by a number, it must be understood to refer to literal days of 24 hours.

The days of creation were literal 24 hour days, consisting of 'evening and morning'.

And, those who believe in the omnipotence of God, have no difficulty in accepting that the God who said, *'Light be!'* - and there *was* light!, is also capable of completing the work of creation without resorting to the use of 'vast geological periods'.

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