

# The ‘Days’ of Genesis 1

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## Background to this Printed Edition

Shortly after this lesson was presented, brother Neil Hagewood transcribed it from an audio tape, sent it to me and requested permission to share it with members of his family. I told him that it was presented extemporaneously and would need some editing if it was to be distributed in print. My schedule did not allow any work on it at the time. Since lectures I have conducted two tours of the Bible Land, another tour of Spain, Portugal and Morocco, and spent a week in London and Paris with much of the time devoted to taking photographs in the British Museum and the Louvre. This was in addition to trying to do my work at Florida College and with the Carrollwood church. I am not bemoaning this, because it is the type of schedule I have chosen over the 48 years I have been preaching. It may explain why some of you don't get replies to your inquiries.

The speech has been edited to make it more readable. Items clearly not in the oral presentation but which may help a person not present to understand what was being discussed have been put in brackets [ ]. I do not believe that there has been any change of content. I trust you will recognize that this is not the same quality I would prepare as something written for publication.

I worked on this while making two crossings of the Strait of Gibraltar between Spain and Morocco. It seemed appropriate since this is an area where seamen have long known the importance of avoiding extremes. I found time for another editing session on the Eurostar between Paris and London. Going under the English Channel reminded me of the depths to which some men will go to discredit those with whom they disagree.

Copies of the audio tape of this or any other lecture or class may be secured from the Florida College bookstore. The toll free number is 1 800 922-2390 (in Florida) or 1 800 423-1648 (USA). Copies of the lecture book, *The Present Truth*, may also be secured from the bookstore.

Several people have quoted from the speech without my permission, but every one I have seen have the quotations presented out of context. Instead of someone telling you what I said, I think you are intelligent enough to read and decide for yourself.

Permission is granted for anyone to make copies of

this material for free distribution as long as the presentation is duplicated in its entirety with this statement.

Copies of the PowerPoint charts and a more detailed, better organized, and documented outline of this material may also be found on the Internet at [bibleworld.com](http://bibleworld.com).

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## The Class Begins

Some of these folks up here [on the stage] can't see the screen, but faith comes by hearing anyway [audience laughter. Brother Hagewood added these notations about laughter]. The last time I preached to a group like this is was out in the country somewhere and the kids sat on the podium. It is good to see every one of you; we appreciate you being here and participating with us in this series of lectures this year. I would like to begin our session with prayer if you will join me, please.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You so much for your kindness and goodness toward us this day and we thank You for the occasion that brings us together and for the interest in your Word that has prompted us to be here. We ask You to deal with us gently and kindly; we ask You to help us to deal with your Word in an honest way and in a way that shows love and respect for You. And we ask You also to help us consider those that may differ with us with the same love. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

## What We Plan to Do in This Lecture Class

This morning I want to talk a little about the days of Genesis and I suspect that there are going to be a lot of you who are going to go away disappointed. And I can tell you that I probably will be one of those because as I have tried to prepare for this, I have realized the impossibility of doing all that needs to be done in this one hour, this one session, one forty-five minutes actually. And yet I want to do some things that I think will be helpful to us. I want to promote study; I want to promote thought. And therefore, if I don't give you all the answers that you think I ought to be giving you, it is intentional. It is to cause you to realize that no one can decide this issue or any other

issue for you; that you have to make this decision on your own. And that means that you are going to have to do the study and the reading. You are going to have to do the investigating. You are going to have to look at the Hebrew and the Greek. You must look at all of those issues. And you are going to be just like I am. You are going to depend on other people that you think may have looked into it and may know a little more about it than you do. And then you are going to have to weigh that evidence and come to the conclusion that you think is best in harmony with the will of God.

### Background of this Lecture Class

I want to give you the background to this speech so that you will have a little bit of understanding. Some folks might think that we just had a lectureship at Florida College in 1999 on the days of creation and the age of the earth. We did not. **This subject was not discussed at Florida College last year.** I have read that it was but it was not. In fact, what happened was that we had a brother by the name of Hill Roberts who spoke in McCarty auditorium – an auditorium that seats about ninety to one hundred people. It is a multi-media facility and so it was an almost last minute thought that we decided that we will use this and bring in some men who will present material that will utilize the audio-visual equipment. And so we had some people that talked about the Internet, [using Power Point, etc.]. We had Hill Roberts to come and speak on the subject of using advanced technology to reach a skeptical world. He also spoke on the subject: "Apologetics for the Skeptic Using God's Natural Revelation." He works in the scientific field and he has used this material while lecturing in Russia and other places and has found it to be successful and that's what he talked about. He didn't talk about the creation; he didn't talk about the *days* of creation. It was about apologetics and how to reach the unbeliever. I was there for every session and I know. To turn this into something – that we had a lectureship and gave him four hours when we have given other people only two or three hours to answer great errors is simply **not true**. This didn't happen at Florida College last year during the lectures.

[Thomas G. O'Neal asserted in *Walking in Truth*, July-Dec., 1999, page 6, that it did happen. He was present for this class and has since devoted a portion of his Jan.-Mar. issue to this speech, but he did not correct this mistake. This tells me more about Tom than I wanted to know! His comments are so biased and uninformed that they really need no response. However, because others who did not hear my lecture are circulating them by e-mail, I make this notation.]

When people began to see this name [of Hill Roberts] on their program, they began to say, "Well, it could be that this brother is going to speak on this" even though that wasn't his topic. The President of the college spoke with him. He said, "No, I have no intention of mentioning that at all." We didn't cut him off. We didn't say, "You can't speak on the program" because we had the program planned. Now I think I can tell you this because I am Chairman of the [Biblical Studies] Department. Had we intended to have someone to present a certain viewpoint, then we probably would have had someone also present an opposing viewpoint – another brother who holds a different view. We just didn't discuss that issue. So you can believe me. I believe you will, because that's the truth; that's what happened.

[As a result of what happened and the misunderstanding about it] there has been much interest generated in [the program] this year. And I'll have to tell you, I had no idea that this brother was such a controversial person when we invited him to speak. Doesn't mean that we wouldn't have invited him; just saying that I didn't know it. A lot of you say "Oh, I've known it for years." But I didn't know it; and I hadn't seen [this issue] discussed in the papers for a long time [before the 99 lecture]. In the last year, there have been articles dealing with it. There has been "e-gossip" dealing with it; you understand what I mean [audience laughter]. And some brethren have been sent to the "**electronic mail chair**" [more laughter]. I would suggest to you that we probably did brethren a great service last year. It has prompted a discussion that brethren evidently thought needed to be discussed. There have been some good articles, I want to say. And so, maybe we've done a good service. That's what education is about; making people think and allowing us to come to conclusions based on our study of the Word of God.

### My Prejudices — What I Believe

I want to start this morning by giving you my prejudices; I want to give you what I believe about this subject, so you'll know where I am coming from, as the old expression goes. I believe that God created the heavens and the earth. I believe that. I'm inclined to think that this was in a six periods of twenty-four hours each — just like we've got an hour here today. But, I recognize some problems with this view; and I'm not going to go into all of those. I studied this in 1956, myself, in a course in Bible and Evolution here at Florida [Christian] College. And my mind has been made up; and my mind basically has not changed in all of those years on this particular topic. *And so, what I'm presenting is basically the view that I have always held on this.* In my book, *The Theme of the Bible*, I



have no discussion of the age of the earth. I want to say that in lectures that I have done [through the years], the same thing has been true. I have avoided talking much about it because it didn't seem to me to be an important issue when I am trying to reach an unbeliever unless he brings it up and it is a problem for him. Then it is something that I would discuss with him and reason with him.

### What I Reject

I want you to know also that I reject *macro-evolution* — terminology that most of you will know. I also reject *theistic evolution*. (You know you can get one of these *evolve pins*; they are just about \$5.95 [a reference to art used on one of the slides]. You can get a Darwin button; it's really neat what the atheists are selling on the Internet.) But I reject all of those views and I want you to know too that I know of no teacher at Florida College, no teacher in any field, science, Bible, or anywhere else who holds either one of these views. Nobody here holds these views. I want you to know that. That is my confidence in the people who are here.

### Serious Mistakes in Our Study

I think that we have made — many times and in many different areas of study — we have made some serious mistakes, some serious errors. The serious error that we have made in many fields is to equate our understanding of the Bible with the current understanding of science. Now what turns out to be the mistake many times is that we change our understanding. In other words, we think today, we think this year, that this teaches this and maybe five years from now because we think — because we've studied a lot more, our view may change on something. I'm not going to ask, "Who is there here whose view has never changed on some Bible topic?" I hope that all of you who were sinners are now Christians, and I hope that all of you who are Christians have grown. And so I'm not even going to insult you by asking if you have ever changed your mind on a subject.

When we take the current science — that could be in any field, but we are talking about evolution, etc. — and we say, "We've got to meet *that!*," you must realize that those views change too. What is held as a scientific view this year may not at all be held by tomorrow — by the leading people of science — because of something that they learned that will change the whole thing. And there [are many] examples of that which could be given, but I wanted to give you two or three examples.

**The *kind* of Genesis.** For example, years ago it was popular to say that the *kind* of Genesis — each will reproduce after his own *kind* — was equal to the *species* of [vonLinne] Linnaeus [1707-1778]. He thought he had identified [and classified] all of the animals and he said that these were identical to the *kinds* of Genesis. But we know that was wrong. If brethren had jumped on a bandwagon then and had a heresy trial of some kind for everyone who said, "Well, you know that I just don't believe that *kind* is the same as *species*," you know now we would laugh about it. We would laugh about it because of the misunderstanding of both views — what *kind* is, and also what *species* was [to Linnaeus]. They are not the same.

**Flood level at Ur.** The same thing was true when there was a flood level found at Ur of Chaldees (which may not have been Ur of Chaldees anyway, as we know today. [See an article about the location of Ur in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Jan./Feb., 2000]). The flood level was found there by Sir Leonard Wooley [in the 1920s and 1930s]. People immediately — he did — equated it with the great flood of Noah. Scholars today know that this is not correct. The flood didn't even reach the other cities nearby let alone cover the earth as Genesis records. So we would say, "This is not correct."

**Noah's flood = flood geology.** Another mistake that sometimes is made is to equate Noah's flood with the theory of Flood Geology which is taught today. And it may be so, but I don't know absolutely that it is. I would have to say that may be another one of these mistakes that we are making, as we try to equate something in the Bible with something that is known in the scientific field today.

### Brethren Have Said:

#### "No Date for Creation in Bible"

Through the years, most of the brethren have said that there is no date for the creation in the Bible. I have quotations here. For example, **Foy Wallace**, in *God's Prophetic Word*, argued like this. He said, "There is no date and therefore there is no conflict." I have a mimeographed booklet by **Cecil Willis** that I have had in my files for years entitled *The Bible or Evolution*. He said, "The Bible does not give the precise age of the earth, hence science and the Bible could not conflict on this point." He just said that they couldn't conflict on this point because the Bible doesn't state anything on this. **John Clark**, in his booklet *Studies in Evolution and the Bible*, says that the Bible does not give us any dates for the creation. And he argues also that there is no conflict.

I [**Ferrell Jenkins**] have done the same thing

repeatedly through the years. In an article in *Truth Magazine* in 1959 I made this argument. In early editions of *The Theme of the Bible* — many of you have used that book, privately published at first, later published by Guardian of Truth Foundation [when Roy Cogdill, Cecil Willis and I were working together on the *Truth in Life* Bible class literature] — there was a lesson called "The Antiquity of Man" in which I dealt with this. Later, I took it out of *The Theme of the Bible* in the revised editions because I put out a book on evidences [*Introduction to Christian Evidences*, published till now by the Guardian of Truth Foundation]. But when I put out the book on evidences, I carefully left out anything about this because it was just the sort of thing that I thought took people on a wild goose chase that was not necessary in discussing with unbelievers. In an oft-preached lesson that I call "What Is Man?" I have this point. This is just the way my outline reads, but you can imagine I say a little more. "The Time of Creation: The Bible only says 'in the beginning,' there is no further commitment." After that I discuss Ussher's chronology and the date of 4004 BC and so on. So I have tried to avoid the issue of the date of creation and the age of the earth just as these other brethren have done through the years.

### How is the Problem of the Age of the Earth Solved?

How have people tried to solve this problem that we have — that we don't know the age of the earth? The **evolutionists** say that the earth is 4.5 billion (some say 6, some say 4 or 5.4). What's one tenth of a billion of a year? I mean when you are counting like that, that's like me trying to figure out how much money Bill Gates has. It makes no sense to me; it has no meaning to me. I look for two quarters to buy a *USA TODAY*. But you understand that and I think I am talking to a group that's pretty well convinced that [the evolutionary date] is wrong. That is not right; at least we don't believe it. ***I certainly don't believe it.***

And then on the other hand, another way to handle this was **Ussher's chronology**. Archbishop Ussher of Ireland [1581-1656] came up with this date of creation at 4004 BC. He had everything all figured out to where he could have the earth created about 9 AM in the morning on October [23. Actually, it was Lightfoot, the famed Hebraist of Cambridge, who concluded this about the creation of Adam.]. He was a good scholar and he didn't get any closer than that. We would say today, and I think that anybody who has looked at this 30 minutes, would say, "That's not correct."

I think a lot of us would say, "But **the earth is young**; the earth is not old like the evolutionist says;

the earth is young." I have some material on the antiquity of man and it is my intention to put this [lecture material] and some of that also on my web page — *bibleworld.com* — as soon as I can get it finalized. I notice that all of the politicians tell you their web page. So you can go to *bibleworld.com* and you'll be able to find that as time permits.

How do we solve the problem of these two great extremes — the two great extremes? Probably nobody here would agree with either of these. So somewhere we've got to **fall in between**. I've said to you, "I follow a lot closer to Ussher than I do with the other one." But let's see what we have. Some say that this problem is solved by saying that these are **not literal 24-hour days** but that they may involve long periods. This is one view that people take.

Others say that there is a **gap** between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 — that Genesis 1:1 is the statement of the creation and then there may have been a long period before God began to form things, to make things, as we read them in days one through six.

Another way to handle this problem is to look for **gaps in the genealogies**, and say, "Okay, there are some [gaps] in the genealogies and in the chronologies." Some try to argue there are not [gaps] but there are in both of those and as a result we can allow more time [than Ussher]. You know that everybody in the world, I mean that all major peoples have different dates for creation. Even the Jews have a different date from the one that we use; they are different from Ussher. This is not the same year to them as it is to us. A lot of this is a religious thing with people. The people in the East have different dates.

[There is a good summary of this information in *The New Millennium Manual* by Clouse, Hosack and Pierard (Baker, 1999).]

So everybody would have to say, "Well obviously 4004 BC is not correct." And we might find some time in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

Ussher took all of these at face value, as literal. I think Ussher would have said, "I'm just reading the Bible for what it says." I mean, what does a person think when he reads that Abraham lived so many years and begat so and so and then the son lived so many years and begat. So what does a person think? I think Ussher would have said a person thinks that this is a chronology. And I think a lot of brethren have thought that through the years even though study would show that this is not correct.

[At this point I used an illustration about Ussher's date for the flood. Immediately after the class a friend told me he thought what I had said was not

correct. Upon checking, I soon discovered that he was right. The next morning I read a statement to correct this mistake. The point added nothing of substance to the lecture and I have omitted it here rather than perpetuate the mistake.]

### How Then Shall We Solve the Problem?

Now how is the problem solved? Some say that these are not literal 24-hour days. That's one way to solve the problem. That these are **periods**, these are **ages**. This is what William Jennings Bryan said in the "monkey trial" (Scopes trial) in Tennessee in 1925 — that these are ages. In fact, this probably was the current view among Bible believing people in the last (the last century was the 19th century; we are not in the 21st century yet; won't be until January 1, 2001. You figure that one out. It's easy. Is 10 in the first decade or the second decade? Is 100 in the first century or the second century? Is 2000 in the second millennium or the third millennium? It's easy. But I'm not withdrawing from anybody over it.) [Audience laughter]

Another says, "there's the **gap theory**." Another says, "there are **gaps in the genealogies**." And others say that the **scientific evidence does indicate a young earth**. And there are lots of people who believe that — that there is scientific evidence. I have to admit that I get lost in reading it. I am not trained in that area and I read their arguments and sometimes I can understand their conclusions and then sometimes I can't. But I know there are lots of people, and there are people among us, who are capable of understanding those arguments and draw *that* conclusion. And there are people equally capable who draw the conclusion from number one [gap theory], also.

### "Day" in Genesis 1-2

What are the views of days in Genesis 1 and 2? It is used as **daylight**. Genesis 1:5 says that God called the light *day* and the "darkness He called *night*." "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." Also you have *day* marked by *evening and morning*. This expression is used in the chapter about six or seven times. And this gives us the impression that this was a *day* — a **literal day 24-hour day**. We'll have to suggest to you that there is a literal problem that we also have to deal with. And that is, that it was not until the fourth day that some people [including brethren, e.g., Doug Burgess, *Searching the Scriptures*, June, 1961] say that the sun was not created until the fourth day. Personally, I don't believe that view. I just believe it was determined — it was set to determine [govern] days and nights and seasons at that time. And that allows me to have light from the same source as I have it on the fourth day. But if it

wasn't created until the fourth day — and there is room for discussion there — if it wasn't, then the first three days may not be like the other days. Do you understand what I'm saying? I mean we've got to allow that there are lots of possibilities here to deal with all of this.

I see it as **daylight in contrast to night** in 1:14 — what we would roughly call a 12-hour period. As I look on further, I find that it is a 24-hour day in contrast to years. For example, that He's going to say that there will be "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years." I conclude that is a day — a literal 24-hour day — in contrast to years.

In 2:4 it is used of the **entire creation period**. There the text tells us with regards to the finishing of everything, "this is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the *day* that the Lord God made earth and heaven." It seems to me that that goes back and covers everything of what we would call the six or seven days of creation. And it is called a *day*. *Day* is used in the sense of a period of time and not simply one literal 24-hour period. Those are the different ways that even Genesis 1 uses this term *day*. And we have to study the context in order to see this.

### The Views of Days

So what are the views of days? Well it is (1) a literal 24-hour period. Some have held (2) the day-age theory (long periods). It is (3) a literal day with gaps in it. There are people who hold that view, that God created but then God allowed gaps between the days. It doesn't say that each was consecutive; and so that would be their argument. *I don't accept that*. And then there's a theory called (4) the pictorial day or the revelatory day — meaning that God revealed to Moses in seven days (or six days) what He had done. Bernard Ramm made that view popular in [*The Christian View of Science and Scripture* in 1955].

**Must we decide?** There are some respected scholars who have rejected these long ages. I wonder, do we have to decide on this? I mean is it an issue that we really have to say *absolutely*; we know *absolutely* that "I know that **this** is the *correct answer*" out of these that are given here? Must we decide? Some respected scholars — both in and out of churches of Christ. (When I mention those "out of" I mean those we use in classes in Evidences, for example — those who on this subject use good, sound, biblically based arguments.) There are people like that who have cautioned against dogmatism. They reject the long ages but they simply say that we can't be sure about this. **James Hodges** is a teacher here [now librarian]. He taught a course *Bible and Evolution* and a course in Genesis for many years. He has an extensive book

on the subject of evolution which has been published only in mimeographed [or Xeroxed] form. This has almost been a life work for Jim and it's entitled: *Creation Versus Evolution*. My copy was published in 1986. In it, he warns against this idea of being dogmatic with regard to this. He says,

We believe the creation account in Genesis without deciding exactly how God did it or what the historic sequence was. For apologetic purposes, we need to demonstrate ways the account *can* be harmonized with scientific facts, but certainly is beyond achievement and always will be because of our limited information. How appropriate is the statement in Hebrews 11:3, 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God.' 31

I mention **Batsell Barrett Baxter** because of his book, *I Believe Because*. I used it for a few years as a [supplementary] text in a Christian evidences course that I taught here, Introduction to Christian Evidences. After presenting these four views Baxter says,

Rather than become dogmatically involved with any of the hypotheses of creation, it is well for the Christian to be aware of their possibilities and their limitations and to accept the Genesis account on faith. We can never know exactly when God created our universe or exactly how he did it. 101

Oswald Allis wrote *The Five Books of Moses*. He also wrote a little book, *God Spoke by Moses*, which is an excellent study on Genesis. Allis was one of the old Presbyterian scholars from the earlier part of the century who wrote against premillennialism. Brethren have used his works over and over. It doesn't mean that you agree with everything he wrote. I'm just saying that he is respected among our people. In [*God Spoke by Moses*] he has an entire appendix dealing with the idea of whether these are literal 24-hour days. He suggest that "we cannot be sure, and must not be dogmatic" [11].

## The Gap Theory

What do we mean when we talk about the gap theory? The gap theory is sometimes called the *ruin reconstruction* theory. It says that Genesis 1:1 says that God created the heavens and the earth; it then says that the world was blotted out. That is in the blank space there [between 1:1 and 1:2]! Then it says that God saw that it was good and the earth became something else. When it says that the earth was "waste and void," they try to prove from the Hebrew that the term for *was* should have been translated "the earth *became* waste and void." They argue that there was a creation in Genesis 1:1 and then there was a wiping out of that world. Then there was the opportunity for

God to re-create, to make, to form or to fashion things, as we know them today. That theory is based on, as I said, the blank space there. But why did people advocate this gap theory? It was widely and strongly advocated [by conservative scholars].

Many brethren didn't say much about the gap theory but when they said, "we don't know the age of the earth and there is no conflict in science and Genesis," they had to be assuming some gap somewhere. The theory was popular in the early part of the 20th century and I assume that many [brethren] held this view.

## The Pre-Adamic Race

The gap theory also suggested a *pre-Adamic race*. Why? You must account for the fossils. As late as Sunday a lady said, "What are you going to talk on Brother Jenkins? I'd like to come and hear it." I said, "I don't think it's what you think I am going to talk about." I knew that it would be *full* in here (audience laughter). She wanted some information [answering evolution] for her grandchildren.

Let us notice some brethren who held the pre-Adamic race idea. **Robert Milligan** wrote *The Scheme of Redemption* which was widely used by our brethren earlier in the century, probably as a textbook in Freed Hardeman College. In the early years all the brethren that we've studied under used it.

I have a quotation from **Robert Welch** in a little booklet called *Living Faith and Modern Science* put out a few years ago. He said, "Pre-historic life is not denied in the Bible." He cites Milligan. And then he says, "The order of the universe as we know it was begun in Genesis 1:3." I suppose I've had that little tract in my possession for 30 to 40 years. I never heard any big outcry about that. And yet I don't see that [view] in the Scripture at all. It is there in the blank spot. Do you understand what I am saying? I'm saying there was some room for brethren to come up with possible ways that we could understand the problems with which we are faced in Genesis 1.

## Catastrophe Theory or Flood Geology Theory

There were also people who tried to harmonize [the apparent age of the earth] with the **catastrophe theory** or the **flood geology theory** which is now used to account for the fossils. And the earliest people who did that in the late 1800s were people like George McCreehy Price, a Seventh Day Adventist, Byron C. Nelson, and others.

In this century, Whitcomb and Morris wrote the book *The Genesis Flood*. Morris, especially, was back of the Creation Research Institute. Many people have

hooked into this as the current understanding of science from a conservative viewpoint and have said, “This is the answer.” Not every brother held the view that this was the answer. In fact, in 1970 David Koltenbah, (a student here when I was here and later a physics professor at Ball State University) wrote two articles in *Truth Magazine* critiquing this view of flood geology that these men have advocated as the solution to this problem. [There was no response in *Truth Magazine* to this article.]

### Gap Theory and Flood Geology Mutually Exclusive

You can't hold to the gap theory and the flood geology theory at the same time. Now I know a lot of you do [laughter]. But that's like a lot of Jehovah's Witnesses believe, you know, the Lord has already come back but He hasn't. Now that's my honest opinion about that. You think you can, but you can't. If the gap is there, that takes care of everything. And if flood geology is there, all of those people argue for a young earth. So you can't hold to the two views. The theory of flood geology is a young view; it is a new view. One nice thing about growing older (I'm not sure every morning all of the reasons), but one nice thing about growing older is coming to understand the old expression that “what goes around, comes around.” Neckties come back and theories come back. Lapels go out of fashion and theories go out of fashion. And the theories we hold about the Bible sometimes go out of fashion too. Not because we've changed our convictions but because we've learned differently. There is a difference in a person “learning better” and “changing his mind” and in a person “losing his convictions” and “losing his faith.” Let us never forget that. We all need to change our views as evidence shows us. But let us all hold to our conviction and never lose our faith in God and in His Word.

This gap theory was held by **Harry Rimmer**. When I was growing up every young preacher had to have his books to learn how to preach on Bible and Science. After all, Foy Wallace had used it in his book *God's Prophetic Word* — didn't give credit, but he did. I don't always give credit in my sermons either. Boy, Saturday night I noticed my web page is so busy [audience laughter]. And you know it's even busy on Wednesday. And what you don't know is, I know exactly who you are [actually, I have chosen not to know this] and where you came from [more laughter]. Talk about loss of privacy, that's really it. Well anyway, in the 20th century, **Foy Wallace** held this view in his book *God's Prophetic Word*. He said, ““in the beginning God' is a phrase that defines remote antiquity hidden in the depths of eternal ages.”

Another set of books every young preacher had to have was *Sound Doctrine* by **C. R. Nichol and R. L. Whiteside**. These brethren said, “how far back in the remote ages of the past the heavens and the earth were created? **No one knows!**” Of Genesis 1:2, they say, “This seems to have antedated the six days of creation mentioned in the following verses. How long this condition of things continued before the six days of creation began, no one knows.” So they said that the earth is old. They just said there's a *gap*.

### Problems With the Gap Theory

There are a lot of problems with the gap theory. Let me mention these briefly. People argue that when the Lord said to replenish the earth, that what He meant was that it had been *plenished* before. But this Hebrew word [*male*] just means, “to fill.” “Fill the earth,” is what the Lord told them. Those who hold this view say Isaiah 45:18 is an example of the word *was* being translated *became*. “The earth *became* waste and void.” God never intended for the earth to be “waste and void.” [This was a mis-statement. The verse says that the Lord did not create it a *waste* place: “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, But formed it to be inhabited), ‘I am the Lord, and there is none else’” (Isa. 45:18).] But the passage is taken out of context. It is talking about the captivity and the fact that He didn't want His people taken off the land; He never intended that it would be that way.

The gap theory is found in the blank space between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This amazes me. It took three chapters just to tell about the flood. Think about that! But in the blank space we have the gap theory which these people have advocated. Klotz, a conservative Lutheran scholar, in *Genes, Genesis, and Evolution* [1955] said, “this theory does not fit with Scripture” [90]. Our brethren were advocating the theory as fitting with Scripture. This excellent book, which I studied in the 50s, argues for 24-hour days and it says, “this [gap] theory does not fit with Scripture.” Oswald Allis also has a response to the gap theory.

### Toward a Conclusion

As we come toward the end of this presentation I want to ask a question of all of you. *Are these men, such as Foy Wallace, R. L. Whiteside, C. R. Nichol and all the others that held the gap theory old earth or young earth advocates?* Looks to me like they are old earth advocates, doesn't it? But see, that is the way they accounted for this problem. That's the way they handled it.

Is there a place in a *congregation* — and that's all

that I can deal with — the congregation where I am a member. That is the only fellowship God gave me and my brethren any authority to withdraw from people, to exclude and include people. I don't have any choice in the church universal. Because everyone who obeys the gospel, the Lord takes care of that count. We have a directory where I preach, and where I work, and where I am a member. It lists the folks that we have to do something about. We have to warn them when false teaching is around. We have to warn them with regard to pernicious errors. Is there a place for two brethren that strongly believe in creation but who hold differing views on the gap theory? Well, I used to think so when I had these guys preaching where I was preaching. And I've always said, "It might be that there was a gap." You know I've given you an indication that I don't think there was. But it might have been. I can't rule it out. Is there room for these two brethren in the church where you are? What about the one who doesn't believe the gap theory is the solution? He says, you guys have made some real good arguments, but I just don't see them. I don't believe that this is the solution to the problem. Is there any place in our congregation for these three men? Is there a place for two who strongly believe in creation but who hold differing views on the days of Genesis? And what about the brother who says he is not sure that that is the solution to the problem? That he hasn't solved it completely in his mind? He believes in creation just as I've told you that I do.

Now I think we run into a problem when we say "must." One of these views "must" be correct. And I've got a good brother friend who said one place that these "must be long ages." And I can't say that. But on the other hand, I can't say that they "must be 24-hour ages." There were some arguments made for that (like Exodus 20 and others) that I didn't have time to deal with. I did have them in my notes here. And you can argue, you know, you can make a good case either way for that — all those things like that. And so we wonder then. Listen to what David Koltenbah said in 1970 in his articles on flood geology. He said, "A trickle of dogmatism can grow to a tide of dogma in which are drowned true Christian liberty and the noble spirit of the Restoration Movement which speaks where the Bible speaks and remains silent where the Bible is silent."

Brethren, I'm going to preach for about 30 seconds. How long since any of you folks had a real Gospel Meeting? Now what I mean — those of you who are older know what I mean — I mean you had somebody in there to tell people the gospel plan of salvation, the uniqueness of the church of the Lord, the Bible is the Word of God, the two covenants and how to distinguish between those and that sort of thing

which I have done clearly in my book, *The Early Church*. How long since you had one of those? You know what we have done? Because less people are coming, we've turned these into Special Series. Special series on evidences. Special series on Archeology. Special series on how we got the Bible. Special series on the home. Special series on trends in the church. See, I do those too. But don't you see what we've done? We've turned inside; we're edifying the folks that are there. I have no opposition to that. But let's quit kidding ourselves in saying that we are having an "evangelistic meeting" when we do that. And if we have one of those, what ought to be the purpose of it so far as the outsider is concerned? Bring him in and then study with him these things he needs. And I know that some of us do that; and I know that some of you do that.

Brethren, I think that's a trend in the church that I'm scared of. And that's the trend that we've quit preaching the *distinctive* message. Because, folks weren't coming anyway, but we've got to get back to it. And I think if we were doing that, there wouldn't be nearly as much time to fight with one another over this. It wouldn't come up that often. For many years I have said that the whole [foundation] principle of the Restoration Movement is that you can *teach the Word to people and they are intelligent enough to make their own decisions*. I believe this is correct because it is biblically based. And there is nobody in our brotherhood who can say, "**This is it** and you've all got to agree with my view."

Now brethren, that's the history that we come from. And I'm sad to say that those who are younger and who may only be ten, fifteen or twenty years old, because it's been *always* a certain way in *your* life doesn't mean that it has *always been that way*. And it's time people who are older spoke up and said, "Look, what goes around, comes around." Not to be wishy washy; not to compromise on any biblical truth. But to say, there are some things that are so difficult that I may not be able to draw the same conclusion you've drawn. And then to give that [same] opportunity for [other] people.

Let us be less "crisis minded." Because you just discovered this issue doesn't mean that I didn't discover it in 1955 and 56. And it doesn't mean that my convictions have wavered in that length of time. Because *you* want to make it an issue today doesn't mean that *I* have to join you. Let's be *less* crisis minded, brethren. It's like the news. How many of you have seen a good news report on the war in Iraq lately? But we're still fighting every day. Our planes are still over there every day. Once CNN came in, diplomatic things started to be conducted on television. And once E-mail came in, brethren started

to condemn people on E-mail. Without ever studying with them. Without ever talking to them. Without ever discussing the real differences and issues that exist. Now if you’ve got a problem with this in the congregation where you are, bring in some men who can help you with it and discuss it; and study it for yourself. Let us all do that. Let’s be less crisis minded on everything. Let’s be less suspicious of motives.

Somebody said, “Well Florida College had Hill Roberts; they are sending signals.” We aren’t sending any signals. We just had a brother come in and speak on using technology to reach the world. It was no signal. But if you question my motive, this is what I’m talking about. Because it’s not true.

Let’s get busy trying to learn how to reach the lost. (I’m back to my preaching now about gospel meetings.) And let’s study an issue carefully before we start a campaign against a brother. And let’s be sure that we do that in love when we are convinced that he is wrong. *I am not against issues being discussed.* I think there have been some good exchanges on this subject in the last year. I was serious when I said I think we did a good service. We didn’t mean to [laughter]. That was not what we had in mind; we didn’t even bring up this subject. But it served as the catalyst for brethren to discuss it. Let’s keep discussing it! But let’s discuss it in a spirit of brotherliness and of brotherly love.

Well, we’re back to *bibleworld.com*. If I had put that [as advertising] on the Super Bowl do you know what it would have cost? [laughter]

Thank you, Marty [Pickup, who served as chair of the session].

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## Postscript

James Stephen Wolfgang completed a PhD dissertation, “Science and Religion Issues Among 20th-Century Restorationist Religious Groups,” in the History of Science and Medicine Program, University of Kentucky, 1997. He was invited to present two lectures on “Science and Religion in the Restoration” during the 2000 lectures. I sought not to intrude into his topic. A brief discussion of his topic may be found in “Creationism and Churches of Christ” in *A Tribute to Melvin D. Curry, Jr.* Wolfgang tells us that a senior staff writer for *Truth Magazine* in 1970 recalled that “H. Leo Boles [editor of the *Gospel Advocate* and twice president of Nashville Bible School] took the position that it was not contradictory of Bible teaching to recognize the possibility that the ‘days’ of Genesis 1 were long periods of time.”

In his classes, which followed mine, Wolfgang cited numerous Restoration thinkers who advocated to some extent, or at least allowed the possibility of an old earth. These included Alexander Campbell, Robert Milligan, Alfred Fairhurst, Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, Hall L. Calhoun, W. W. Otey, Jack Wood Sears, Donald England, Rita Rhodes Ward.

These examples are not presented to suggest that the thinking of men serves as authority for us. They do show that highly respected, and widely used, brethren have held old earth views without being called false teachers or being exiled by others.

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