

# BULLETIN BRIEFS

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## The earth—young or old?

Jon Gary

Williams



From the time Moses penned the book of Genesis people who believe the Bible to be inspired by God have considered the earth relatively young, within the time frame of a few thousand years, not billions or even millions of years.

However, within the last two centuries another idea of the earth's age has emerged. This new concept has come about due to a growing belief in the theory of evolution, a theory which requires multiplied millions of years for the development of life on earth. Belief in this theory has been promoted as a science and has gradually come to dominate scientific circles, although there is no scientific evidence supporting it.

The influence of the evolutionary theory has been so cleverly advanced that many Bible believing people have fallen under its influence and, consequently, have been convinced to accept an "old earth" theology.

But the obvious question is raised; How can an old earth theology be harmonized with the Biblical account of creation? In an attempt to harmonize this contradiction two views have been advanced.

## THE "DAY AGE" THEORY

This theory teaches that each of the six days of creation were not ordinary days, but were long periods of time, extremely long eons of time. Hence, the word "day" is said to be figurative or symbolic. However, that the word "day" in Genesis one is a normal, twenty-four hour day is shown by the following:

1) One principle of Biblical interpretation is that words are to be understood in their normal, literal sense unless there is something in the context that demands otherwise. However, there is nothing in Genesis one that even hints at the "days" being anything other than regular, twenty-four hour days.

2) The days are addressed as "first day," "second day," "third day," and so on. Note that throughout the rest of the Old Testament when

called "having an affair." God refers to these things as "filth." In Ephesians 5:2-4, we see the sharp contrast between walking in love with Jesus Christ as our sweet smelling sacrifice to God, and the filth of sin. "**But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting...**" (Ephesians 5:3,4). God's word cannot dwell in one who has a wicked heart (Colossians 3:5-17; I Peter 2:1,2). "**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God**" (Matthew 5:8).

"Superfluity" refers to overflowing. The *naughtiness* (This same word is translated "wickedness" in Acts 8:22) to be put away is of an overwhelming amount. Matthew 15:19 reminds us that "**out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.**" The hearts of evil men are such that they even have evil imaginations (Proverbs 6:18). This would be a bubbling over or *superfluity* of wickedness.

"**and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**" - What does it mean of the word when it says it is *engrafted*? The term means implanted. It is like a seed which takes deep root (Matthew 13:21). So it is that God's word must be deeply rooted, *engrafted*, in our hearts. How is the word received? It is received through meekness. Note that the Bereans "**received the word with all readiness of mind...**" (Acts 17:11). Vines Expository dictionary Of New Testament Words defines *meekness* as "that temper of spirit in which we accept His (God's) dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting." For a clearer definition, we see *meekness* in the context of Colossians 3:12: "**Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.**" Our Lord commands us to have an attitude of trust and humility like that of a child (Matthew 18:3). A heart that is well cultivated with humility receives the word. The same grows deeply, bringing forth fruit.

"**But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,**" - The term "*doer*" denotes action on the part of the hearer. When one becomes a Christian, he becomes a light (Matthew 5:16). He becomes a part of the body (I Corinthians 12:12). All body parts (hands, eyes, ears, legs, etc.) are functional. Every Christian must continue his walk (action) in the light (I John 1:7-9). James' point is that it is not enough to simply know the word, the word must be lived in our lives.

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the word “day” (*yom*) is joined with a numeral, it consistently refers to a normal day.

3) Each day has a morning and an evening, which is simply a Jewish idiom for expressing the two halves of a normal day, much as we would say night and day.

Additionally, if the days were long eons of time, there are a number of unexplainable problems. For example:

1) How did insect-cross-pollinated vegetation (created on day three) exist for millions of years without insects (created on day six) to cross-pollinate them?

2) How did vegetation (created on day three) exist for millions of years without mist (created on day six) to water them?

The fact is, the only reason some regard the days of Genesis one as long periods of time is because of the preconceived idea of an old earth.

## THE “GAP” THEORY

This theory teaches there are two separate creations divided by a gap. It is said there was an initial creation in Genesis 1:1 and another creation involving the six days. Presumably, there was a gap between the two involving possibly billions of years. However, there is a very serious problem with this view as well.

Moses, the writer of Genesis, also penned the book of Exodus. In that book he also addresses the creation. From the Genesis account it can be logically concluded that the total of creation took place within the six days. However, the Exodus account is more precise, specifying a time frame. Exodus 20:11 reads, “**For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is...**” So, the creation of heaven and earth mentioned in Genesis 1:1 is placed within the six days. Also, in Exodus 31:17 Moses reaffirmed this truth. “**...for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth...**” Therefore, gap theorists are forced to give an unnatural meaning to the days in Genesis one.

The scriptures could not be clearer. There are not two creations divided by a so-called gap, but only one creation of the six days, which included Genesis 1:1. So the question we ask is this: Do we take the gap theorists’ view of Genesis one or do we take the testimony of the inspired writer? The answer is obvious.

Trying to harmonize an old earth theology with the scriptures is a futile effort. The word of God is simply too plain on this vital truth.

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## The “Prosperity Gospel”

Chris Perry

(Editor’s note, TV screens are often filled with what have come to be called televangelists. Many pretend to perform miracles, but such are fake “signs and lying wonders” (II Thess. 1:9). An even more prevalent method to attract attention is the preaching of the gospel of economic materialism where the preacher causes the masses to “suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:5). The gullibility of viewers who accept preachers who

are afraid to affirm even the fundamentals of the faith is pathetic. JWaldron) Read on:

If it were to be judged merely by popularity, Joel Osteen’s “ministry” would be a success. The television broadcast of Lakewood Church’s services reaches 100 million homes, and Osteen’s book *Your Best Life Now* was a New York Times Best Seller. However, an interview on *Larry King Live* a couple of years ago provided a glimpse into the heart of Joel Osteen’s message. While there is no doubt that Mr. Osteen earnestly desires to provide some type of guidance to those who hear him, there is just as little doubt that his message—and that of many others like him—falls short of Biblical demands in several key ways.

First, one cannot help but be taken aback by Osteen’s aversion—not just *avoidance* but *aversion*—to anything remotely related to doctrine. Notice Osteen’s noncommittal attitude after being asked, “But don’t you think if people don’t believe as you believe, they’re somehow condemned?”

“You know, I think that happens in our society. But I try not to do that. I tell people all the time, — preached a couple of Sundays about it. I’m for everybody. You may not agree with me, *but to me it’s not my job to try to straighten everybody out.* The Gospel is called the good news. My message is a message of hope, that’s God for you. You can live a good life no matter what’s happened to you. And so I don’t know. *I know there is condemnation but I don’t feel that’s my place.*” (emphasis mine throughout this article, CP)

It seems that Joel Osteen is not even willing to stand up for the fundamental ideals of the denominational world, let alone true Biblical doctrine. Larry King followed a question regarding belief with the following:

**KING:** “What if you’re Jewish or Muslim, you don’t accept Christ at all?”

**OSTEEN:** “You know, I’m very careful about saying who would and wouldn’t go to heaven. I don’t know ...”

**KING:** “If you believe you have to believe in Christ, they’re wrong, aren’t they?”

**OSTEEN:** “Well, I don’t know if I believe they’re wrong. I believe here’s what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person’s heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don’t know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don’t know. I’ve seen their sincerity. So I don’t know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.”

Osteen gives no solid Biblical answers. His answer to the all-important problem of human suffering is “*I don’t know Larry. I don’t know it all*” (while true to an extent, his knowledge seems horribly limited). Osteen’s favorite filler statement in this interview is “*I don’t know...*” and truly he doesn’t appear to know much of anything concerning the word of truth. However, Jesus taught, “**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**” (John 8:32). Paul commanded Timothy to “**preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine**” (II Timothy 4:2).

Just as disturbing as Osteen’s lack of knowledge and concern for the basic truths of the Gospel is his focus on material success. Consider this exchange between King and Osteen:

**KING:** “What is the prosperity gospel?”

**OSTEEN:** “*I think the prosperity gospel in general is -- well I don’t know. I hear it too. I don’t know. I think what sometimes you see is it’s just all about money. That’s not what I believe. It’s the attitude of your heart, and so you know, we believe -- but I do believe this, that God wants us to be blessed. He wants us to be able to send our kids to college, excel in our careers. But prosperity to me, Larry, is not just money, it’s having health. What good is money if you don’t have health?*”

**KING:** “*Also many in the Christian belief are wary of too much material, aren’t they?*”

**OSTEEN:** “*Yeah, I think some of them are. But to me, you know, I hope people get blessed if they can handle it right. Because it takes money to do good. You know to do things for people. To spread the good news. So I think it’s all a matter of your heart.*”

Those who listen in ignorance to Osteen’s messages cannot help but get the impression that righteousness *equals* wealth, which is merely an echo of Job’s friends: “*Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?*” (Job 4:7). However, such a materialistic view of God’s blessings is full of serious holes in light of the nature of the world. How many who have bought into such philosophies end up echoing the sentiments of the Psalmist: “*For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*” (Psalm 73:3)? Joel Osteen might have trouble gaining support for his prosperity gospel from the literally millions of New Testament Christians here and in foreign lands who labor to get by from day to day *yet remain faithful to God*. To be sure, God has promised the faithful Christian the necessities of life (Matthew 6:25-33), and those who abide by godly principles will fare better than those in similar circumstances who do not, but the focus of the Gospel message is not salvation of the bank account (Matthew 6:19-21).

Joel Osteen and others of his mold provide what the masses want to hear. With “*itching ears*” (II Timothy 4:3) people in general want someone “preaching” to them who will do no more than stroke their fragile egos and reinforce their beliefs that if they work hard and are more or less good people, they will be blessed materially. However, may those of us who wear the name Gospel preacher “*not shun to declare all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). 303 Dekalb St., McMinnville, TN 37110

## BE DOERS OF THE WORD

Don A. Iverson

“**Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,**” (James 1:21, KJV). In view of the fact that man’s wrath is opposed to God’s righteousness, sin must be put out of our lives.

In the Greek language, “*filthiness*” denotes dirt or filth. This is the only place in the entire New Testament where this word is used. The Holy Spirit, by the hand of James, communicates God’s disgust toward sin. God is very specific and plain spoken. He does not beat around the bush. On the other hand, men often use soft words to describe evil. Sin is called “*wrong-doing.*” Man uses the terms like “*little white lie, falsehood, or untruth*” to describe lying. Homosexuality is called “*gay.*” “*Adultery*” is