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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS—A MATTER OF TIME

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Q I read a series of articles you published some time ago in *Reason & Revelation* on the Bible and the age of the Earth. However, your date for the creation of the Earth appears to be inconsistent with other portions of the biblical text. You apparently failed to take into account Acts 13:17-20, and you therefore have not left enough time for the period of the judges. Recalculate your dates and you will see that they cause the text in Acts to clash with 1 Kings 6:1. How can this problem be resolved?

A During the more than twenty years that we have been publishing *Reason & Revelation*, we have received numerous comments in response to articles that we have written, or stands that we have taken, on various biblical and/or scientific issues. Some letters tender a nice commendation. Some express mild disagreement. Still others offer a stern rebuke. And finally, some simply ask for additional information or clarification. The letter from which the above question was taken, falls into the latter category.

The author of the letter asked a perfectly valid (and an extremely interesting) question that we thought our readers might like to see answered in the pages of *Reason & Revelation*. This particular inquiry provides an intriguing case study in how alleged biblical discrepancies can be answered—even though arriving at a solution sometimes may require an extra dose of determination and some pretty dogged research. First, we would like to elaborate a bit on the seeming discrepancy between the two passages under consideration. Second, we then would like to explain—as the querist asked us to do—how the problem can be resolved. The two passages are as follows (the

controversial portion of the text has been placed in bold type).

The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. **And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years**, until Samuel the prophet (Acts 13:17-20, KJV).

And it came to pass in the **four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt**, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Jehovah (1 Kings 6:1, ASV).

A concise summation of the putative problem between Acts 13:17-20 and 1 Kings 6:1 was provided by Alan Montgomery in his presentation, "Towards a Biblically Inerrant Chronology," at the Fourth International Conference on Creationism in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (August 3-8, 1998). As he explained:

A summation of the reigns of the judges and enemy oppressions reveals that there is a major discrepancy with I Kings 6:1, which states that the temple construction began in the 480th year since the exodus. Mauro (1987, p. 41) states that no other era produces "a greater lack of unanimity among chronologists of repute." ...**Neither can Paul's**

statement be reconciled to the 480 years. In Acts 13:20 he says that the Israelites wandered 40 years in the wilderness, conquered the seven tribes of Canaan and were ruled by judges for 450 years until Samuel. If, to these 450 years we add 40 for the wandering in the wilderness, about 22 years of Saul after Samuel's death, 40 years of David and 3 years of Solomon, we arrive at a total of 555 years rather than 480 (1998, p. 401, emp. added).

In short, then, the querist who wrote us was asking this. Acts 13:20 seems to indicate that **after** the fathers were chosen, and **after** the Israelites emerged from Egyptian slavery, and **after** they had wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, and **after** God had helped them conquer the land of Canaan, **then** God provided numerous judges for a period of about 450 years until the time of the prophet Samuel—who appointed Saul as king, who then was followed by David, who eventually was succeeded by his son, Solomon. Yet 1 Kings 6:1 plainly speaks about the "fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel" being only **480 years after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt**. As Montgomery noted, if one tallies the years included in Acts 13, the number is far too high to agree with the 480 years alluded to in 1 Kings 6:1. **If** Acts 13 effectively places 450 years as the period of Israel's judges **after** all the other events that are mentioned, then the conclusion we reached in our articles in *Reason & Revelation* regarding the age of the Earth (that the Earth is approximately 6,000 years old; see Thompson, 1999) does not leave enough time for the reign of Israel's judges. What is the

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explanation for this conundrum—or is there one? Yes, there is. Permit us to explain.

As we begin, let us offer a summary of principles that must be considered when dealing with alleged contradictions. First, a contradiction does not exist between passages that refer to completely different persons, things, or events. Second, no contradiction exists between passages that involve different time elements. Third, a contradiction cannot be said to exist between verses that employ phraseology in different senses. Fourth, supplementation is not contradiction. And fifth, in order to negate the charge that the Bible contains a real contradiction, all that is necessary is for the Bible student to show the possibility of a coherent harmonization between the alleged contradictory passages (see Jackson, 1983). Actually, the solution to the problem presented in a comparison of Acts 13:20 with 1 Kings 6:1 involves several of these principles. Again, allow us to explain.

The **apparent** discrepancy between the two passages under consideration has to do with the fact that certain Greek manuscripts differ from others in their recording of Paul's statement in Acts 13. When we compare various translations of the verse, it quickly becomes clear that the particular **wording** of the verse is in question.

And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. **And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet** (Acts 13:19-20, KJV).

And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, **he gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years; and after these things he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet** (Acts 13:19-20, ASV).

He overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. **All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet** (Acts 13:19-20, NIV).

And having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. **And after these things he gave them judges till Samuel the prophet, to the end of about four hundred and fifty years** (Acts 13:14-20, Darby Bible, 1890).

[A]nd having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He did divide by lot to them their land. **And after these things, about four hundred and fifty years, He gave judges—till Sam-**

uel the prophet (Acts 13:19-20, Young's Literal Translation).

Each one of these five translations has the prepositional phrase “about four hundred and fifty years” describing a different set of events. The KJV says **the period of the judges** lasted 450 years. The ASV indicates that **the children of Israel were given the promised land** for 450 years. The NIV says that “all this” (the events described in verses 17-19—**choosing of the fathers, the Exodus, the wilderness wandering, and the distribution of the land**) took about 450 years. The Darby Bible seems to agree primarily with the NIV that **all the events** happened “to the end of about four hundred and fifty years.” And Young's Literal Translation simply plops the phrase in the middle of the sentence and does not give much of an indication as to what it describes. It is obvious that the respected scholars who translated these different versions have had some problems agreeing on the exact events that should fall under the phrase “about 450 years.”

In order to solve this “problem” we must realize, as James Jordan has concisely stated,

[t]he proper resolution takes notice of the fact that there is more than one reading for these texts. We have from the early centuries of the Church many manuscripts of the New Testament, and sadly they do not all agree with each other on every point. That necessitates a task called “lower criticism,” which is the study of these various texts to try and determine which reading is correct, or most likely, at a given point of conflict (1998, 10[7]:3, emp. added).

The King James Version was completed in 1611 and then revised several times, one of the latest being in 1769. The Greek text used to produce the King James Version is known as the Textus Receptus. However, after the King James Version was translated and revised, several manuscripts came to light that were older than those used in the KJV translation. C. G. Ozanne assessed Acts 13:17-20 as follows:

In order to appreciate the significance of this reference, it is important to notice that the phrase “four hundred and fifty years” is in the **dative** case. This is in marked contrast with the two references to “forty years,” which are both in the **accusative** case. “The dative implies point of time, not duration” (Bruce). It indicates that at this point in the narrative 450 years had elapsed, dating presumably from the first event recorded in the apostle's address.... The meaning now is that at the point of time at which the land was given as an inheritance, 450 years had elapsed since

the choice of the fathers (v. 17) [1970, p. 32, emp. added].

In order to clarify this, we turn to two modern translations, both of which are based on the Alexandrian text (an older, more reliable text than the Textus Receptus, upon which the KJV is based). The New American Standard Version translates Acts 13:19 like this: "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred years." The New International Version offers further illumination:

The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. **All this took about 450 years** (Acts 13:16b-20a, emp. added).

The "all" of verse 20 refers to the time of the patriarchs (when God "chose" Abraham and Isaac) until the inheritance of Canaan. Old Testament commentator A.C. Hervey concurs:

The usual explanation of the reading of the R.T. [Received Text—BT/KB/AB] ...is that the years are dated from the birth of Isaac, and the meaning is that the promise to give the land to the seed of Abraham **was actually performed within four hundred and fifty years** (after the analogy of Gal. iii. 17), which gives a good sense and is not at all improbable (n.d., 18[4]:405, emp. added).

In other words, the 450 years does not point **forward** to the time of the judges (nor to some period in between the conquest and the judges), but **backward** to the events preceding the time of the judges. Bruce Metzger, one of the foremost authorities on the Greek New Testament, pointed out that in the original text (specifically the Alexandrian text) verses 17, 18, and 19 are all one continuous sentence, and it was the separating of that one sentence into several English sentences that has caused so much confusion (1994, p. 359).

In a footnote in his commentary on the book of Judges, renowned scholar C.F. Keil, speaking of the Alexandrian reading of the text, stated that the phrase under consideration "can hardly be understood in any other sense than this, that **Paul reckoned 450 as the time that elapsed between the call of Abraham (or birth of Isaac) and the division of the land**, namely 215 + 215" (1996, 2:203, emp. added).

In his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, well-known Greek scholar Daniel B. Wallace stated that "certain formulaic phrases are often employed, ...referring to the previous events" (1996, p. 333, emp. added). He then listed Acts 13:20 as one of those instances—and therein lies the key to the alleged discrepancy between 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13:20. When the Alexandrian manuscripts are translated properly, it becomes clear that Paul's statement of "about 450 years" in Acts 13:20 was "referring to the previous events" related in verses 17-19, not the following period representing the time of the judges. The best rendering of this fact comes from the NIV.

The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, he endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert, he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. **All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet** (Acts 13:17-20, emp. added).

After considering all the possible solutions, it soon becomes clear that no discrepancy exists between the disputed passages. In fact, a concise, important piece of the Old Testament chronology falls into place with a proper reading of Acts 13:20, once again proving that it is just "a matter of time" before alleged biblical discrepancies are put to rest. —BT/KB/AB

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Q On occasion, those who defend the concept of an old Earth suggest that it is impossible to know how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden and that untold years may have elapsed during that time period. Is this a possibility? How long were Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

A The suggestion that millions or billions of years may have passed during the time Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden is a common ploy of those who, like progressive creationists and theistic evolutionists, advocate an ancient Earth. However, it is nothing but another failed attempt to try to insert vast ages of geologic/evolutionary time into the biblical record. Consider, in this regard, two popular arguments that frequently are offered in support of such a concept.

First, one theistic evolutionist, John N. Clayton, has suggested that since a part of God's curse on Eve was that He was going to **multiply** her pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16), she **must** have given birth to numerous children in the garden, or else God's curse would have meant nothing to her. How could God "multiply" something if she never had experienced it in the first place? Furthermore, Clayton has lamented, rearing children is a process that requires considerable time, thereby allowing for the possibility that Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden for an extended period prior to being evicted after their sin. As Clayton has written: "Every evidence we have biblically indicates that mankind's beginning in the Garden of Eden **was not a short period** which involved one man and one woman" (1980, 7[1]:5, emp. added).

The second argument (which is somewhat related to the first) suggests that Adam and Eve **must** have been in the garden for quite some time because after they left, it was said of Cain that "he builded a city" (Genesis 4:17). To quote Clayton, that would be something that "you cannot do with you and your wife" (1980, 7[1]:5). In other words, Cain had to have a large enough family to assist him in building "a city." That, suggests Clayton, would have taken a lot of time.

Mr. Clayton is completely in error when he states that "every evidence we have biblically indicates that mankind's beginning in

the Garden of Eden was not a short period which involved one man and one woman.” The fact is, **every evidence we have biblically proves conclusively that man and woman could not have been in the garden for very long.** Consider the following.

First, regardless of what defenders of an ancient Earth may **wish** were true, the simple fact of the matter is that the Bible sets an outer limit on the amount of time that man could have lived in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 5:5 states clearly that “**all the days** that Adam lived were **930 years.**” We know, of course, that “days” and “years” already were being counted by the time of Adam’s creation because in Genesis 1:14 (day four of the Creation week) God mentioned both in His discussion of their relationship to the heavenly bodies. Therefore, however long Adam and Eve may have been in the garden, one thing is certain: they were not there for any time period that exceeded Adam’s life span of 930 years. But there is additional information that must be considered as well. Genesis 4:25 explains that Seth was born after Cain slew Abel. Since the biblical account makes it clear that Seth was born outside the garden, and since Genesis 5:3 informs us that Adam was **130** years old when Seth was born, it is obvious that **Adam and Eve could not have been in the Garden of Eden any longer than 130 years!**

Second, surely it is not inconsequential that **all** the children of Adam and Eve mentioned in the Bible were born **outside** the Garden of Eden. **Not one conception, or birth, is mentioned as having occurred while Adam and Eve lived in the garden** (see Genesis 4:1 for the first mention of any conception or birth—only **after** the couple’s expulsion from Eden). Follow closely the importance and logic of this argument, which may be stated as follows.

One of the commands given to Adam and Eve was that they “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth” (Genesis 1:28). [Interestingly, Isaiah would say many years later that God created the Earth “to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18).] In other words, Adam and Eve were commanded to **reproduce.**

Now, what is sin? Sin is: (a) **doing** what God said **not to do**; or (b) **not doing** what God said **to do.** Up until the time that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:6), had they sinned? No, they still were in a covenant relationship with God and everything was perfect. Since that is the case, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that Adam and Eve were doing what God had commanded them to do—reproducing. Yet, I repeat, the only conceptions and births of which we

have any record occurred **outside the garden!** In other words, apparently Adam and Eve were not even in the garden long enough for Eve to conceive, much less give birth.

Third, while the Bible does not provide a **specific** time regarding how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden, it could not have been very long because Christ Himself, in referring to the curse of death upon the human family as a result of its sinful rebellion against God, specifically stated that the devil “was a murderer **from the beginning**” (John 8:44). [Of interest is the fact that in Luke 11:45-52, the account is recorded of the Lord rebuking the Jews of His day. He charged them with following in the footsteps of their ancestors. He foretold the destruction that was yet to befall them. And, He announced that upon them would come “the blood of all the prophets, which was shed **from the foundation of the world.**” Then, with emphatic linguistic parallelism typical of Hebrew expression, He added: “**from the blood of Abel** unto the blood of Zachariah....” Jesus therefore placed the murder of Abel near the “foundation of the world.” Granted, Abel’s death occurred some years after the Creation, but it was close enough to that event for Jesus to state that it was associated with “the foundation of the world.” If vast spans of time—that is, enough to accommodate evolutionists and their sympathizers—occurred while Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, then how could the shedding of human blood be declared by the Son of God to extend back to the “foundation of the world”?]

Satan and his ignominious band of outlaws (“sons of the evil one”—Matthew 13:38) have worked their ruthless quackery on mankind from the very moment the serpent met mother Eve in the Garden of Eden. When he and his cohorts rebelled and “kept not their proper habitation,” they were cast from the heavenly portals to be “kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6).

The conditions of Satan’s surrender were harsh. Although he had been completely vanquished, although his armies had been thoroughly routed, and although the Victor had imposed the worst kind of permanent exile, Satan was determined not to go gently into the night. While he admittedly had lost the war, he nevertheless was planning future skirmishes. Vindictive by nature (Revelation 12:12), in possession of cunning devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), and thoroughly determined to be “the deceiver of the world” (Revelation 12:9), he set his face against all that is righteous and holy—and never once looked back.

His anger at having been defeated fueled his determination to strike back in revenge.

But strike back at whom? God’s power was too great, and His omnipotence was too all-consuming (Job 42:2; 1 John 4:4). Another target was needed; another repository of satanic revenge would have to be found. And who better to serve as the recipient of hell’s unrighteous indignation than mankind—the only creature in the Universe made “in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26-27)? As the late Rex A. Turner Sr. observed: “Satan cannot attack God directly, thus he employs various methods to attack man, God’s master creation” (1980, p. 89). What sweet revenge—despoiling the “apple of God’s eye” and the zenith of His creative genius! Thus, with the creation of man, the battle was on. Little wonder that in his first epistle the apostle Peter described Satan as an adversary that, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (5:8).

Now—knowing what the Scriptures tell us about Satan’s origin, attitude, and mission—is it sensible to suggest that he would take his proverbial time, and twiddle his figurative thumbs, while allowing Adam and Eve to revel in the covenant relationship they enjoyed with their Maker (Genesis 3:8 relates how God walked with them in the garden “in the cool of the day”)? Would Satan simply “leave them alone for a long period of time” so that they could conceive, give birth to, and rear children in the luscious paradise known as the Garden of Eden? Is this how a hungry, stalking lion would view its prey—by watching admiringly from afar, allowing it hundreds or thousands of years of fulfilled joy, and affording it time to conceive, give birth to, and rear a family? Hardly—which is why Christ described Satan as a murderer “from the beginning.” Satan was in no mood to wait. He was angry, he was bitter, and he was filled with a thirst for revenge. What better way to slake that thirst than introducing sin into God’s perfect world?

What may be said, then, about John Clayton’s suggestion that Adam and Eve must have been in the garden for an extended period of time since God said that He was going to “multiply” Eve’s pain? How could He possibly “multiply” something she never had experienced? This quibble can be answered quite easily. Does a person have to “experience” something before that something can be “multiplied”? Suppose I said, “I’m going to give you **\$100.**” You therefore stick out your hand to receive the \$100 bill I am holding in mine. But I immediately pull back my hand and say, “No, I’ve changed my mind; I am going to give you **\$1,000** instead!” Did you actually have to possess or “experience”

the \$100 before I could increase it to \$1,000? Of course not.

The fact God said He was going to “multiply” Eve’s pain in childbirth does not mean necessarily that Eve had to have experienced **some pain** prior to God’s decree that she would experience **more pain**. God’s point was merely this: “Eve, you were going to experience some pain in childbirth, but because of your sin, now you will experience even more pain.” The fact that Eve never had experienced **any** childbirth pain up to that point does not mean that she could not experience **even more** pain later as a part of her penalty for having sinned against God.

Last, what about John Clayton’s idea that Adam and Eve must have been in the Garden for an extended period of time because the text indicates that when they left Cain and his wife “builded a city” (Genesis 4:17). Clayton has lamented that this is “something which you **cannot do with you and your wife**” (1980, 7[1]:5). Of course he would be correct—if the city under discussion were a modern metropolis. But that is not the case here.

The Hebrew word for city is quite broad in its meaning. It may refer to anything from a sprawling village to a mere encampment. Literally, the term means “place of look-out, especially as it was fortified.” In commenting on Genesis 4:17, Old Testament commentator John Willis observed: “However, a ‘city’ is not necessarily a large, impressive metropolis, but may be a small unimposing village of relatively few inhabitants” (1979, p. 155). Again, apply some common sense here. What would it be **more**

likely for the Bible to suggest that Cain and his wife constructed (considering who they were and where they were living)—a thriving, bustling, metropolis, or a Bedouin tent city? To ask is to answer, is it not? To this very day, Bedouin tent cities are quite commonplace in that particular area of the world. And—as everyone will admit—two boy scouts can erect a tent, so it hardly strains credibility to suggest that Cain and his wife would have been able to accomplish such a task as well.—BT

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Q In discussions I have had with people who hold to an ancient Earth, the suggestion has been made, based on the passage in Hebrews 4:4-11, that the seventh “day” of Creation (i.e., God’s Sabbath rest) discussed in Genesis 2 still is continuing, and that it is in that seventh “day” that the time may be placed to accommodate an old Earth. Is this view correct?

A People who believe in what is known as the Day-Age theory (which teaches that the “days” of Genesis 1 were “ages” rather than normal 24-hour days) sometimes suggest that the seventh “day” still is continuing. Their argument is that since the phrase “evening and morning” is not used in regard to

the seventh day, it must not have been a 24-hour day. Therefore, we are living in the seventh day—a position they must defend to remain consistent. There are, however, a number of serious problems with this approach. The first has been explained by Guy N. Woods.

Jehovah finished his labors at the end of the sixth day, and on the seventh rested. The narrative provides no basis for the assumption that the day he rested differed in any fashion from those which preceded it. It evidently was marked out and its length determined in the same manner as the others. **If it was not a day of twenty-four hours, it sustains no resemblance to the sabbath which was given to the Israelites** (1976, pp. 17-18, emp. added).

Moses’ obvious intent was for the reader to understand that God: (1) **rested** (past tense); and (2) gave the seventh day (the Sabbath) as a day of rest because He had rested on that day.

There is a second problem with the view that the seventh day still is continuing. James Pilgrim has addressed that problem.

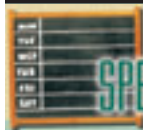
...[I]f the “day-age” theorists accept day seven as an “age” also, we ask, “What about day eight, or day nine, or day ten...?” On the **assumption** that the earth is 7,000 years old (a most distinct possibility), let the “day-age” proclaimers put 2,555,000 days (7,000 years at 365 days per year) on a page. Now let them circle the day which began the normal 24-hour day. Let them also give just one scripture reference to substantiate the validity of that circle. Can they do it? No! Will they do it? No! (1976, 118:522, emp. in orig.).

The third problem with the idea that the seventh day is continuing has to do with Adam, as Woods has noted:

Adam, the first man, was created in the **sixth** day, lived through the **seventh** day, and into at least a portion of the **eighth** day. If these days were long geologic periods of **millions** of years in length, we have the interesting situation of Adam having lived in a portion of **one** age, through the whole of **another** age, and into at least a portion of a third age, in which case he was many millions of years old when he finally died! Such a view of course is absurd; and so are the premises which would necessitate it (1976, p. 18, emp. in orig.).

Whitcomb has explained **why** these things are true.

...Genesis 2:2 adds that He rested on the seventh day. That day also must



SPEAKING SCHEDULES

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June 3-6	Redwater, TX	(903) 671-2515
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June 12-14	Washington, PA	(724) 222-9017
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Eric Lyons

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have been literal, because otherwise the seventh day which God blessed and sanctified would have been cursed when God cursed the world and cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden. You see, the seventh day must have ended and the next week commenced before that Adamic curse could have come. Adam and Eve lived through the entire seventh day and into the following week, which is simply a confirmation of the fact that each of the days, including the seventh, was literal (1973, 2:64-65).

It also has been suggested that Hebrews 4:4-11, where the writer speaks of the **continuation** of God's Sabbath rest, provides support for this unusual view. First, I would like to present the passage in question, along with the argument framed from it. Then I would like to offer an explanation of why the passage does not support the concept of the seventh day continuing, and why the argument based on it is faulty. Here is the passage.

For he hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"; and in this place again, "They shall not enter into my rest." Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, "Today," saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before), "Today if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. **There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.** For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

Here, now, is the argument. Proponents of the idea suggest that since God's Sabbath Day (the seventh day of the creation week) continues to this very day, then it follows logically that the other days of the creation week were long periods of time as well (see Ross, 1994, pp. 48-49, 59-60; Geisler and Brooks, 1990, p. 230). In support of this position, progressive creationist Hugh Ross suggested: "Further information about the seventh day is given in Hebrews 4.... We learn that God's day of rest continues" (1994, p. 49).

Wrong! Here is the correct meaning of the passage. While the text speaks clearly of the cessation of God's creative activity—beginning on the seventh day—it nowhere implies or states that God's seventh day has contin-

ued from the past into the present. Nor does the passage speak of the **duration** of the seventh day. Mark Van Bebber and Paul Taylor have addressed this point.

Like David in the Psalms, the writer of Hebrews is warning the elect not to be disobedient and hard-hearted. Thus, he alludes to Israel in the wilderness who because of their hard hearts could not receive God's promise of rest in Canaan. "Rest," as used in these verses by both David and the writer of Hebrews, had a specific historic reference to the promised land of Canaan. The Hebrew word used by David for "rest" was *menuwchab*, which is a general term for rest which has a special **location-al** emphasis (e.g., "**the resting place or abode of resting**") [see Brown, et al., 1979, p. 629b]. This concept is echoed by the author of Hebrews who uses the Greek word *katapausis*, which also may refer to an abode or location of resting (Hebrews 4:1, 3-5, 8).

At the climax of this passage, the author promises a future day of rest (Hebrews 4:9; Greek: *Sabbatismos*). This is the only time in the New Testament that this word for "rest" is employed. It seems to be a deliberate reference to Day Seven of Creation. The author does not say, however, that the seventh day continues on into the future. He uses *Sabbatismos* without an article (like saying a Sabbath, rather than **the** Sabbath). In Greek, this grammatical structure would generally represent the character or nature of Day Seven, **without really being Day Seven**. That is, the context makes it clear that the future day of rest will be similar to the original seventh day. The task will be complete; we will live with Christ eternally—our work on earth will be done (1996, pp. 72-73, emp., parenthetical, and bracketed items in orig.).

The passage in Hebrews thus is employing the **essence** of the seventh day of creation to refer to the coming **essence** of heaven—i.e., a place of rest. It is not speaking about the actual **length** of that seventh day. Furthermore, the fact that God has not been involved in creative activity since the close of day six says absolutely nothing about the duration of the various days of creation. When God completed the creation, He "rested"—but **only from His work of creation**. He is very much at work now—but **in His work of redemption**, not creation. Jesus Himself said: "My Father worketh even until now" (John 5:17). While it is **correct** to say that God's rest from creative activity continues to this very hour, it is **not correct** to say that His

Sabbath continues. That was not the point the Hebrew writer was making, and to suggest that it represents either a misunderstanding or misuse (or both) of the passage.

God was not saying, via the Hebrew writer, that He wanted to share a **literal** Sabbath Day's rest with His creation. Rather, He was saying that He intended to enjoy a rest that was **typified** by the Sabbath Day's rest. The Israelites who rebelled against God in the wilderness were not able to share either a "rest" by entering into the physical presence of the Promised Land or a "rest" by entering into the eternal presence of God. R.C.H. Lenski commented on the text as follows:

The point lies in taking all these passages together. The rest from which the Jews of the Exodus were excluded, into which we are entering, is God's rest, the great Sabbath since the seventh day; of course not of the earthly days and years that have rolled by since then and are still continuing, but the timeless, heavenly state that has been established and intended for men in their glorious union with God.

These are not different kinds of rest: the rest of God since creation and a future rest for his people; or a rest into which men have already entered and one that has been established since the redemptive work of Jesus, into which they are yet to enter; or a rest "at the conclusion of the history of mankind." **The seventh day after the six days of creation was a day of twenty-four hours.** On this day God did not create. Thus God made the first seven-day week (Exod. 20:8-11; 31:12-17), and the Sabbath of rest was "a sign" (v. 17) so that at every recurrence of this seventh day Israel might note the significance of this sign, this seventh day of rest being a **type** and a **promise** of the rest instituted for man since the days of creation. Like Canaan, the Sabbath was a type and a promise of this rest (1966, pp. 132-133, emp. added).

Additionally, even if it could be proven somehow that the seventh day of creation was longer than the others (which it cannot), that still would establish only one thing—that the **seventh day** was longer. It would say absolutely nothing about the length of the other six days. And concerning those days, the Bible could not be any clearer than it is in explaining their duration of approximately twenty-four hours. Genesis 1 defines them as periods of "evening and morning" (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). While God's **activity** within each literal day may have been miraculous, there is nothing miraculous about the **length** of the days themselves. They were, quite sim-

ply, the same kinds of “days” that we today enjoy. Attempts to reinterpret the message of Hebrews 4 do not alter that fact. —BT

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Q Doesn't the Grand Canyon prove that the Earth is old?

A The Grand Canyon frequently is described as the most awe-inspiring and spectacular natural feature on the face of the Earth. Listed as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, it became a national park in 1919, and in 1979 was named a World Heritage Site—a designation reserved only for those places that are considered to have universal value for all humankind. Because of its size and vivid coloration, the origin of this natural beauty has been the object of a great deal of speculation. Theories regarding the geological events that led to the present canyon are as abundant as visitors to the South Rim.

To the “man on the street,” one of the most impressive arguments for an ancient Earth is the testimony of sedimentary-rock layers (many of which are thousands of feet thick) strewn around the planet. Scientists (and park rangers) subject us to examples like the Grand Canyon, and present their spiel so effectively that—as we observe those beautiful layers of sedimentary rocks piled one on top of another—the only explanation seems to be that vast amounts of geologic time must have been involved. Each section of the rocks, we are told, represents a time long ago and an ancient world that long since has ceased to exist.

Consider the following statement from a book purchased in 1999 at one of the gift shops in Grand Canyon National Park.

The Grand Canyon presents an unrivaled view into the Earth's geologic history. From the canyon's Paleozoic-era rims to the bottom of the Precambrian-age inner gorge, nearly 2 billion years of time are represented in the exposed rocks, or about two-fifths of the Earth's estimated age of 5 billion years (Hoffman, 1987, p. 11).

The author, John Hoffman, went on to describe how “about 4 million years were required for the Grand Canyon to be eroded to its awesome dimensions” (p. 12). While that book has truly beautiful pictures, the text inside is in dire need of revision. Why?

An article in the September 30, 2000 issue of *Science News* has shown that carving this beloved hole in the ground was not such a long-term project after all (Perkins, 2000). Prior to the 1930s, geologists proposed that the Grand Canyon was about “40 million years old” (Hoffman, p. 218). However, evidence now has come to light that indicates a **much younger** canyon. Research presented at a June 1999 conference devoted to the origin of the gorge suggests that substantial portions of the eastern Grand Canyon have been eroded only within the past million years (according to evolution-based dating methods). **And so, as quickly as ink dries on paper, geologists cut 39 million years off the age of the Grand Canyon, and dropped its age to 1/40 of their previous estimates.**

In justifying their new calculations for the young age, geologists offered a scenario in which portions of the present-day Colorado River above and below the canyon may not have been connected. They believe that the most likely explanation is that “the west flowing tributary of the ancestral lower Colorado River began to carve a small valley eastward into the edge of the Colorado Plateau. The upper portion of the river eventually merged with the ancestral upper Colorado River and its tributaries to form a single river system. The result would have been a strengthened torrent of water that could cut through rock at a faster clip than ever before” (Perkins, 158:219). Faster clip indeed! Thirty-nine million years is a tremendous amount of time to suddenly “just vanish”!

The *Science News* article listed other studies in which data show how fast rivers can slash through rock. It also listed the erosion rates of several neighboring canyons, and

then noted: “Downstream in the Grand Canyon, where the Colorado carries much more water and sediment, rates of erosion are likely much higher” (158:219-220).

Today, we now know that canyons do not take even one million years to form. Consider the Burlingame Canyon. John Morris described its formation in the following manner:

Let me introduce you to Burlingame Canyon near Walla Walla, Washington. It measures 1500 feet long, up to 120 feet deep, and 120 feet wide, winding through a hillside. A small-scale analogy to Grand Canyon it was observed to form in less than six days. In 1904 the Gardena Farming District constructed a series of irrigation canals to provide water to this normally rather arid high desert area. In March, 1926, winds collected tumbleweeds at a concrete constriction along one of the canals situated on an elevated mesa, choking the flow of water, which at 80 cubic feet per second was unusually high due to spring rains. In order to clean out the obstruction, engineers diverted the flow into a diversion ditch leading to nearby Pine Creek. Prior to this time the ditch was rather small, at no location greater than 10-foot-deep and six-foot-wide, and often with no water in it at all. The abnormally high flow crowded into the ditch, and careened along until it cascaded down the mesa in an impressive waterfall. Suddenly, under this extreme pressure and velocity, the underlying stratum gave way and headward erosion began in earnest. What once was an insignificant ditch became a gully. The gully became a gulch. The gulch became a miniature Grand Canyon (2001).

The formation of this canyon occurred in only six days! This new information will force evolutionists to revamp their theories about the early history of the gorge. The Grand Canyon used to be one of the evolutionists' favorite landmarks as they tried to establish an ancient age for the Earth. No more!—BH

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ANNOUNCING: OUR NEW KIDS' "EXPLORER SERIES"

Two months ago in the April issue of *R&R*, when I announced the availability of our newest book, *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It*, I began my "Note from the Editor" with these words: "I know what some of you likely are thinking as you read this. 'Finally! It's about time!' OK, I capitulate. You're absolutely right. It is about time." Well, that same refrain applies to this month's announcement.

For several years, parents and teachers have been urging us to provide them with a Bible class curriculum that they could use to teach their third through sixth graders Christian evidences. We listened. And we have complied.

The result is our new 13-lesson *Explorer Series*, which takes curious young minds on a fascinating journey through God's Word and God's world. Beginning with lesson one, eager children can explore essential facts that will ground them in concepts oftentimes overlooked in regular Bible class settings. They will learn about apologetics. They will examine proof for the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible. They will find facts from science they can use to refute the theory of evolution (including false ideas about their alleged ape-like ancestry). They will be exposed to the evidence that dinosaurs and humans lived on the Earth at the same time. They will discover eternal truths about the deity of Christ and the uniqueness of His church. And so on.

Each 8-page lesson is presented in the same format as *Discovery*, our wildly popular magazine on Scripture and science for children. Every issue is printed in full color on enameled paper in an 8½x11-inch format, and includes professional artwork and illustrations, as well as activities such as puzzles, word-finds, fill-in-the-blanks, true/false questions, and mazes—all of which are designed to reinforce the teaching found within each lesson.

The series is designed so Bible school teachers have the freedom to send individual lessons home with each child, or compile all 13 lessons into a notebook that can be used in class and then given to the child for future reference at the end of the quarter. Sets containing all 13 lessons are shrink-wrapped for the teacher's convenience. We strongly recommend this new series for use in Christian schools, VBS classes, home-schooling situations, and summer camps. In keeping with our mandate to keep all of our materials as affordable as possible, cost for the entire series of 13 lessons is only \$10/set. Why not order a set today for each youngster in your third-through-sixth-grade Bible class program, vacation Bible school, or summer camp enrollment? Call us toll free at 800/234-8558 for credit card orders or orders to be charged to churches.

Bert Thompson

