

## GOD'S COMMAND TO "REPLENISH" THE EARTH

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**My Bible (KJV, 1611) says in Genesis 1:28 that God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth...." The same wording is used again in Genesis 9:1 after the Flood. Since Adam and Eve were told to replenish the Earth, does this not clearly indicate that the Earth had inhabitants before Adam and Eve?**

There are a number of false theories relating to the Genesis account of creation. Among those is the currently popular "Gap Theory." This idea, first proposed in 1814 by Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers, suggests that a vast "gap" of time should be inserted between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, and that during this indeterminable amount of time there lived and died an entire pre-Adamic world, complete with plants, animals, and even pre-Adamic races of people. The popularity of the theory is due, of course, to its supposedly valiant attempt to "squeeze" the geological ages of time necessary for an ancient Earth into the biblical record. The Gap Theory is based on several fallacious arguments, among which is the argument suggested by the question above. Some (though not all) proponents of the Gap Theory have attempted to establish the existence of a pre-Adamic race of people during the alleged gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. One of the arguments often used has to do with the command given to Adam and Eve to "replenish the earth." The argument goes something like this: since Adam and Eve were told to replenish the Earth, and since replenish means to "fill again," it is obvious that the Earth was "full" to begin with. Thus, there must have been a pre-Adamic race of people.

George H. Pember, in his book, *Earth's Earliest Ages*, spoke of a "preadamite race" and of "preadamite man," which he believed belonged to that primeval world with its own "sin-stained history" (1876, pp. 35,67-73). In later years, renowned commentator J. Sidlow Baxter became a defender of the Gap Theory, and even went so far as to speak of a "pre-Adamite rebellion and judgment of Lucifer and associated angel-beings" (1960, pp. 189-190). Others likewise have suggested "pre-Adamic" populations in relation to the Gap Theory.

The truth of the matter, however, is that defenders of the Gap Theory could have saved themselves much time, effort, and endlessly wild speculation if they simply had been more careful to examine the correct meaning of "replenish" in Genesis 1:28. We readily admit that our English word "replenish" derives from the Latin *re* (again) and *plenus* (full), and thus can mean "to fill again." We also readily admit that even *Webster's Dictionary* quotes this verse under its definition of "replenish" as to "repeople." But theological issues are not determined by appeals to *Webster's Dictionary* or modern-day usage. Such issues are determined by appeals to the original languages, however. And in this case, such an appeal immediately clears up any questions on the topic. The Hebrew word, which unfortunately is translated "replenish" in the King James Version of 1611, does not mean to "replenish." That word is *male'*, and means simply "to fill" (Davidson, 1863, p. 488; see also Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1962, p. 22; Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1980, 1:505-506). Interesting is the fact that this very same word is used in Genesis 1:22 where the command is given by God to "fill the waters of the seas." Later versions of the Bible (ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, et al.) have rendered the verb properly as merely "fill."

Also of interest in this regard is the fact that not even the Scofield Reference Bible (which so adamantly defended the Gap Theory in its "Notes") made an argument for a "pre-Adamic" race on the basis of Genesis 1:28, and changed its KJV text at this point (and in Genesis 9:1) by substituting "fill" for "replenish." It might be noted also that even the Gap Theory's leading spokesman (until his death), Arthur C. Custance, acknowledged that the Hebrew *male'* means only "to fill" (1970, p. 8), and denied that

Genesis 1:28 referred to any pre-Adamic race of men (1976, p. 314). Neither does *male'* mean to "refill" or "repopulate" in Genesis 9:1. Rather, its meaning is "to bring forth abundantly" (see Workman, 1982, p. 190). Of the more than 300 times the KJV uses the word *male'*, it is translated by the word "replenish" only seven times, and even those seven could be rendered correctly as "fill" (Morris, 1976, p. 76).

We might add as concluding remarks that the whole idea of pre-Adamic peoples living on the Earth prior to the creation week of Genesis 1 is incorrect. Paul, through inspiration, plainly stated that Adam was "the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45), and that through Adam's sin death entered the world (Romans 5:12; 8:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:21). Certain supporters of the Gap Theory, albeit perhaps inadvertently, have set forth a theory that causes Scripture to contradict itself. If Adam was the first, none existed before him. If death to the race came through his sin, and Paul plainly affirmed that it did, then no one could have died before that sin/death. In providing answers to Bible questions, whatever else we do, we must be careful not to suggest answers that pit the Bible against itself. The Gap Theory does just that, and therefore must be rejected.

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