

Dear Reader

Age of the earth. One of my favorite studies right now! Of course that changes with each new study.

As we look at information, one issue will be as to the approach taken. It is my belief that the Spirit of Prophecy material comes before the Scripture material because the Scripture is the final word. It is also easier for me to present material to a class where the listener can respond, but you of course are going to be very quiet! So I hope that you will not mind if I present the material as if we were able to talk.

The story goes like this. We were in a class where the teacher Carsten Johnsen was pointing out that in the Scriptures every thing was made by God; that one text adds, to all things being made by Him, that without Him was nothing made that was made, not even 1. He then drew a time line on the board and placed an x on the line and pointed out that that x represented the making of the first whatever that was made. (No date was assigned). He then pointed out that before that x there was an eternity unending in which there was nothing but God, and asked,

What was God doing during that unending eternity with nothing? I do not think we came up with an answer.

The reason for starting with this story is because that issue is the issue which starts our study. For some time I wondered as to the answer to the issue of a loving God spending an eternity with nothing. Then I found the answer. The answers must come from the Spirit of Prophecy and Scripture of course. I am a philosophical theologian, (Systematic Theology and Christian Philosophy), but philosophy can not answer with certainty these questions.

I was reading in the Spirit of Prophecy materials when I came across some material where Ellen White is dealing with some issue, and writes that philosophers can no more solve that issue than they can explain how God came to be (Spiritual Gifts, vol.3, p.95). For me a new concept; a great concept!

There was no eternity for a loving God with an eternity of nothing, for God has a starting point in the Spirit of Prophecy material- but does God have a starting point in the Scriptures?

To present this concept to a class I asked individuals when they were born- instructing them to lie when they answered- and then asked questions as to what they were doing on dates years prior to their birth. They all said the same thing in principle- the time I was asking about was a time before them.

In Isaiah 43:10 God says there were no Gods formed before Him. He is the first. By implication God says in this statement that He had a starting point; the same concept as in 3SG95.

Later I was preaching this material and was asked a question about a phrase in Proverbs 8 and looked done to see verse 22 which reads I was with Him at the beginning of His way. Both in Isaiah 43:10 and in Proverbs 8 God has a beginning.

There are texts which, in English, speak of God as being from everlasting to everlasting. The Hebrew word translated into English by our word 'everlasting' is the Hebrew word OLAM. This word often refers contextually to a long period of time and is therefore often translated everlasting. But there are also a variety of passages, including one from the story of the flood in Genesis, where the meaning is a presentation of an unknown date, but not meaning everlasting.

Notice chapter 6, verse 4, where there is first a comment about that there were giants in the land, and then the translator writes something like, from of old. The words 'from of old' are a translation of OLAM.

The number 1 definition for the word OLAM in a Hebrew dictionary is that it means conceal, long duration (see i.e. BDB p. 761). That which is from OLAM is of an unknown age.

When one thinks of the testimony of Scripture then, it says that God is from an unknown date. (From everlasting to everlasting [OLAM] thou art God. see, i.e., Ps.90:2; 93:2).

Genesis 1 starts, In the Beginning God. The question is, when is the beginning? The answer is when God got His start. Before Him there was nothing, not even one. What did He do first? The plan of salvation. Remember - the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth.

In Scripture and in the Spirit of Prophecy the origin of evil starts in Heaven and takes time- Ellen White writes that the development of the issues in the great controversy took a long time; something one understands when one thinks of a loving God doing all He can to save 1, then many of His children; working through what He knew to be the foundation principles for the great controversy and its resolution. Ellen White writes that He did every thing He could do. With His abilities, this would take much time.

But what else did He do back at the beginning of His way (Prov. 8:22)?

In the beginning God created the Earth. Genesis 1:1.

What was it like? It was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep.

How long was it in this condition? From OLAM. From an unknown date; from the time when God had his start.

How old is the foundations of the earth? They can be very old; age unknown. The only age comments are from OLAM and that the developments of the great controversy issues took a long time. (In Scripture other time is often short. Even the prophecies cover only short periods of time- 2300 years, or less.)

According to the chronologies of the Bible, approximately 6000 years ago God created the pretty parts of the earth and Satan needing a home came here seeking a home. (He is twice thrown out of Heaven in Revelation 12.)

Soooo - how old is the earth? The parts of the earth described as being from God's starting point- in the beginning God created the earth- could be as old as we care to guess. The only sure thing is that we do not know- they are from OLAM. Thousands of years old? Millions of years old? All we know is that the issues of the great controversy in heaven took a long time to develop enough to be understood.

The great breakthrough in our thinking is to find that there are 2 ages of the earth- 1 age unknown for the parts described in Scripture as being without form and void and darkness on the face of the deep, and an age of about 6000 years for the pretty parts; the flowers, the trees, people, the animals, etc.

One of the exciting issues to be looked over will be to try to draw a line between the two.

Peter Hare is said to have said once that we may never know why there are 2 bodies of evidence giving us 2 so very different groups of information. (He was one of my teachers at PUC.) If I could I would run out and wake Him up and tell him WE HAVE FOUND IT!!! There are 2 ages of the earth!

One of the problems that have been hiding in our attempts to understand the issues surrounding the age of the earth material is the mixing of the evidences from the research into what may be assumed to be the parts of the earth from the period described as it being without form and void with the research into the questions regarding the parts of the earth we can call the pretty parts- the description appearing in Genesis chapter 1; verses 1 and 2a refer to the beginning while the rest of the material refers to the pretty creation.

(The creation of people on day 6 establishes the 2 creations for the great controversy was already going.) It is of interest to note that in a study of the Sabbath and its origin this same dichotomy appears.