

Genesis 1...An Overview of the Creation Days

The Progression of the Creation Days...

Days 1–3 serve to address the barren state of the creation: the day and night are separated, the land and the sea are distributed, and finally on the third day the earth is made to sprout with vegetation: “plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed” (Gen. 1:11).

Days 4–6 then address what could be called the “desertedness” of the creation...lights are hung to guide the day and the night, sea creatures fill the waters, flying creatures soar in the air, and beasts creep on the ground. **Finally, the pinnacle of God’s creation takes place on day 6: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ ” (v. 26). God’s plan for creation, then, involved the making of a home and then creating living occupants.**

Another way of looking at this sequence is God first “forms” and then “fills” His creation.

The Days of Creation...Day One

Genesis 1 ¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1) refers to the dateless past when God brought the universe into existence out of nothing (Ps. 33:6; Rom. 4:17; Heb. 1:3).

As we move from the Bible’s first verse toward the narrative of Genesis 1, important questions are raised about how to understand the events in the very beginning...

The first issue can be summed up in a simple question: Is Genesis 1:1 a title sentence introducing the creation chapter, or does it record the actual creation event?

Those who see verse 1 as a chapter title open up the question whether Genesis teaches creation ex nihilo, that is, creation out of nothing. The issue is that if Genesis 1:1 does not describe a historical event, then the action of creation begins at verse 3, where “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

In this case, creation begins with the already-existing matter that is presented in verse 2. In that version, Genesis 1 presents not true creation but the reforming of the chaotic matter already in the universe.

The great majority of conservative scholars insist that Genesis 1:1 does teach creation ex nihilo. John Calvin asserts that the verb used for “created” (Hebrew, bara) implies original creation.

While Genesis 1:1 does majestically introduce the chapter, there is no reason to doubt that it serves as more than a title sentence or thesis statement. On its own terms, Genesis 1 reports the event of the original creation.

By way of reminder...

“The heavens and the earth”...a “merism”

Genesis 1:1 states that God created “the heavens and the earth.” It is often asserted that this statement constitutes a “merism”. This literary device uses polar extremes as a way of gathering together everything in between. To say that God created “the heavens and the earth,” then, is simply a way of saying that he created everything—that is, the universe.

It is undoubtedly true that God created the whole universe, but it is unlikely that the expression “the heavens and the earth” is making this point alone. In addition to functioning as a merism, it identifies the two great realms of creation: the material and the immaterial. ...In addition to the physical, there is the unseen, heavenly world that was also created by God.

David Atkinson writes that “heaven refers to a higher world, of angels, of God’s throne, of God’s glory...There is much within the created world which we cannot sense, cannot weigh and measure... There is a created spiritual world, just as there is a created material world”

This was evidently the view of the early church Council of Nicaea, which began the Nicene Creed by saying, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.”

Genesis 1 will detail the creation and forming of the material universe, which is why verse 2 focuses on “the earth” separately from the heavens.

But from the beginning, God created all that is, including the spiritual realms. No doubt, from the perspective of the original hearers of Genesis, “the heavens and the earth” encompassed both the material and spiritual realms.

Moreover, Hebrews 11:3 plainly states creation ex nihilo as the Bible’s own interpretation of Genesis 1: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

The Gap Theory...

A second question concerns how Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 relate to each other.

Genesis 1 ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² ***The earth was formless and void...***

In the early 1800s, Thomas Chalmers was a noted theologian and also an amateur geologist. At that time, evidence from rock formations was being used to argue for a much older age of the earth than is accounted for in the Bible.

Wanting to harmonize Scripture and science, Chalmers proposed what is known as the gap theory. This view argues that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 there is a large gap of time—perhaps millions of years—during which a cataclysm took place that made a ruin of God’s original creation. Under this view, the expression “The earth was without form and void” describes the result of God’s judgment for the rebellion of Satan and his angels. The original creation was thus made into a ruin that had to be repaired.

This gap theory was included in the notes to the influential Scofield Study Bible and in this way became standard teaching among conservative Christians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There are a number of reasons, however, to rule out the gap theory.

First...there is nothing in the text to suggest a massive time gap between verses 1 and 2, or to suppose that it assumes the rebellion of Satan. The Bible does assume the fall of Satan and his angels, but the lack of details regarding this event is not an invitation to insert it in the creation account without any textual basis.

The most conclusive reason to reject the gap theory stems from the grammar of Genesis 1:2. Genesis 1:1–2 does not describe two different events separated by a massive gap in time and a cataclysmic rebellion

against God. Rather, it records the initial creation and then gives three descriptions of the state of affairs that resulted...

Regarding “formless and void” Joel Beeke writes...What the original creation was at the beginning, not what it became. The gap theory tries to argue original creation became corrupt, but the expression means empty or uninhabited (Job 26:7; Jer. 4:23). Isaiah 45:18 proves the world was made to be inhabited. Also v. 31 shows there was no death or corruption before the fall.

In Genesis 1:2 God is not destroying but creating. It thus describes an original lack in the creation, not because God has torn down but rather because he has not yet built it up. The raw material was there, but it had not yet been suitably fashioned.

The Hebrew terms translated “barren” and “uninhabited” (or formless and void) set up the progression that will be fulfilled in the six days of creation that follow.

Darkness over the Deep...Genesis 1:2

There is no evidence of anything here (i.e. in reference to “darkness”) other than what God ordained. Darkness is simply the absence of light, and likewise Genesis 1:3 shows that it was dark in the primeval mass simply because God had not yet shined his light upon it.

The scenario of the original creation indicates a raw mass of potential on which God had not yet begun his further work of fashioning and blessing. It was not God’s intention for his creation to lie in darkness. Therefore, his first act after creation was to ordain light to shine upon it: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3).

Source...Richard Phillips *Genesis* (edited)

Let there be light...Genesis 1:3

Genesis 1³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Joel Beeke writes... “God commanded the light to shine and then separated the light from the darkness.

But how could there be light when the light-bearers aren’t mentioned until the fourth day (vss. 14–19)? Since we aren’t told that this light came from any of the luminaries God created, it probably came from God Himself who is light (John 1:5) and wears light as a garment (Ps. 104:2; Hab. 3:3–4).

The eternal city will enjoy endless light without the help of the sun or moon (Rev. 22:5), so why couldn't there be light at the beginning of time before the luminaries were made?

All one needs is a rotating globe and a directional aspect to the light to produce day and night, and God could have directly produced the light, as He will in the heavenly city (Rev. 21:23)."

Richard Phillips on the Triune God in Creation, specifically the Son...

In our study of the opening verses of Genesis 1, we have noted the dominant place occupied by the triune God. We have seen God the Father, who "in the beginning . . . created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). We have encountered God the Spirit, who was "hovering over the face of the waters" (v. 2). As Christians, we should suspect the presence of God the Son as well. After all, Paul stated that by Jesus "all things were created, in heaven and on earth . . .—all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16).

Hebrews 1:2 identifies Christ as "the heir of all things, through whom also [God] created the world." If all things were created by and through God the Son, we would expect his presence to be notable in the creation account of Genesis 1. Where, then, is Christ in the creation?

The answer to this question is seen in Genesis 1:3: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." The Gospel of John explains how this relates to Christ by referring to Jesus as the Divine Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1–3). The deliberate link to the opening lines of Genesis is obvious.

The New Testament depicts Christ's salvation as a new work of creation, so it is no surprise that it also places Jesus as God and with God in creating the heavens and earth.

Seeing Jesus' glorious presence in the very opening moments of creation further helps us to appreciate his humility in coming to die for our sins. As Paul pointed out, the very Jesus who is one with the Creator himself was later incarnated so as to redeem us from our sins.

Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7–8). Sidney Greidanus writes: “The King of the universe became a slave. When the world was headed for destruction, God spoke his word again through Jesus. . . . The Word of God, Jesus, created this world, and the Word of God, Jesus, will redeem this world.”

Richard Phillips *Genesis* (edited)

Day two (vv. 6–8)

Genesis 1 ⁶Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

Michael Barrett comments...”This word (firmament) means “expanse” and includes outer space. It is not just the sky since God calls the firmament Heaven (v. 8) and the stars are put in the firmament (v. 14).

This is the expanse which God stretches out (Job 9:8; Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13; Jer. 10:12; Zech. 12:1).”

“The Firmament: What Did God Create on Day Two?” (Excerpts)

Terry Mortensen (Answers in Genesis)

Considerable disagreement exists in the church about what God made on the second day of Creation Week in Genesis 1. Should it be called “the firmament” or “the expanse”? Was the firmament or expanse the earth’s atmosphere where the birds and clouds are? Or was it a hard, metal-like dome or vault over the atmosphere under which or in which the sun, moon, and stars were placed? Were the “waters above” clouds, or did they form a vapor canopy above the atmosphere that collapsed at the beginning of Noah’s flood? Or is the expanse what we today call outer space and the “waters above” are the outer boundary of the universe?

A careful examination of the Hebrew text leads to the conclusion that 1) the expanse is outer space, 2) where the birds fly and the clouds float is the “face of the expanse,” and 3) the “waters above” are the outer boundary of the universe.

Many Christians today have assumed that the firmament (or expanse) created on Day 2 of Creation Week is the atmosphere where the birds fly and the clouds float. Many young-earth creationists (no doubt in part because of the influence of the writings of Henry Morris and John Whitcomb) also think that “the waters above” the firmament are a watery canopy (made of vapor, liquid, or ice) in the upper atmosphere which collapsed at the onset of Noah’s Flood to produce the many days of rain. On the other hand, some commentators...say that the firmament was a hard, metal-like shell covering the atmosphere and attached to the perimeter of a circular, flat earth.

However...a careful examination of the biblical text (and especially the Hebrew words in a few key phrases in Genesis 1) does not support these various interpretations.

Rather...the firmament/expanse (Hebrew raqiya‘) is primarily what we call “outer space,” the atmosphere is the “face of” of the raqiya‘, and the waters above are at the outer boundary of the universe. I am concurring with and supplementing the view of the firmament (or expanse) advocated by leading Hebrew scholars including William Barrick.

Some creationists have argued that a vapor (or liquid water or ice) canopy existed in the upper atmosphere before the Flood and then collapsed at the beginning of the Flood, contributing to the weeks of torrential rains.

I do not think we can argue persuasively for a pre-Flood watery canopy based on Genesis 1:6–8 (or Genesis 7:11 and 8:2, or any other passage of Scripture that I am aware of). In addition, creation scientists have encountered serious problems when trying to develop a scientific model for the canopy idea.

I admit that it is mind-boggling to think of water at the outer boundary of the universe. But it is not any more mind-boggling for me to believe that than it is to believe that God created things out of nothing, that He parted the Red Sea and Jordan River, that He became a little baby in Mary’s womb, walked on water, died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead, and that He is coming again to create a new heavens and new earth where there will be no sin, and no death.

If I interpret the Bible on the basis of what makes sense to me in my very limited knowledge and experience in the twenty-first century, I will end up rejecting much of the Bible. But there are too many good, intellectually and spiritually compelling reasons to trust all of the Bible. And there are good exegetical reasons to think that all eight of those acts of God above are literally true.

Barrick, William D. 2013. "A Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View." In *Four Views on the Historical Adam*. Edited by Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, 201–202. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

Barrick, William D. 2016. "Old Testament Evidence for a Literal, Historical Adam and Eve." In *Searching for Adam*. Edited by Terry Mortenson, 45–48. Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books.

<https://answersresearchjournal.org/firmament-what-did-god-create-day-2>

Excerpts from "What Were the Waters of Day Two?"

Danny R. Faulkner on January 29, 2021 (Answers in Genesis)

One of the more common questions we receive at Answers in Genesis is what were the waters of day two of the creation week? Encompassing only three verses (Genesis 1:6–8), the account of day two says

And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Notice that the expanse God made on day two is intimately related to the waters of day two. God made the expanse amidst the waters to separate waters above the expanse from waters below the expanse. So, this raises a second question, what is this expanse? We probably can't answer these two related questions separately, but they must be answers in tandem. Further complicating the issue is that older English translations of the day two account used the word *fīrmament* rather than *expanse*. The former word suggests something hard, while the latter word doesn't give that impression at all. First let's start with the waters.

God created the earth in verse 1. However, the earth as God created it at the beginning was far from complete, for verse 2 states,

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

“Without form and void” is better rendered as “unformed and unfilled.” Over the following days of the creation week, God worked to shape the creation and fill it. This includes the work of day two. Notice that initially there was darkness over the deep. The word “deep” here refers to deep bodies of water. Land did not exist (or perhaps appear) until day three, so the initial earth was either entirely water or at the very least the earth was completely and deeply covered with water. Lest there be any doubt about this, the next phrase says that God’s spirit moved “over the face of the waters.” This importance of water in the creation is echoed elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Psalm 136:6; 2 Peter 3:5). On day two, it suited God’s purpose to divide the waters into two, with the expanse in between the two.

Perhaps getting a handle on what the expanse is will help in understanding what these upper waters are.

Early Influences

Key in deciphering the identity of the expanse is the clue that God called the expanse “heaven” (v. 8). Three times the account of day four (Genesis 1:14, 15, 17) says that God placed the luminaries (sun, moon, and stars) in the “expanse of heaven.” **So, wherever the heavenly bodies are, that would be the expanse. Today we would say that the location of the heavenly bodies is (outer) space, so perhaps to people in the 21st century, the best identification of the expanse would be the space of the universe.**

However, we must be careful, for our modern understanding of cosmology is of recent origin. With a different cosmology, people in the past may have thought of the expanse a bit differently than we do today.

The Greek cosmology of that day featured a spherical earth at the center of a hard, transparent celestial sphere to which the astronomical bodies were attached.

For instance, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in the 3rd – 2nd century BC.

The Septuagint (abbreviated LXX), as this translation is called, was translated in Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandria was the major city of Greek culture and learning at the time. The Greek cosmology of that day featured a spherical earth at the center of a hard, transparent celestial sphere to which the astronomical bodies were attached. The LXX translators chose the Greek word stereoma to translate the Hebrew word raqia, the thing God made on day two. Stereoma has the meaning of something hard or firm. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul used the same Greek word when he commended the Colossian church for the firmness of their faith in Christ (Colossians 2:5).

When Jerome translated the entire Bible into Latin (the Vulgate) in the late 4th century, he chose the Latin word firmamentum to translate raqia. As you may surmise, we get our English word firm from the same root that this Latin word comes from.

Therefore, this is a good translation of the Greek word stereoma. But is it a good translation of the Hebrew word raqia? No, because raqia doesn't mean something firm or hard. Rather, raqia means "expanse." So, why did Jerome translate raqia as firmament? The cosmology of Jerome's day was the same as it was 6-7 centuries earlier when the LXX was translated, so Jerome probably believed the hard, transparent celestial sphere model best fit the day four description of where the heavenly bodies were. Therefore, Jerome probably concurred with the LXX and chose the appropriate Latin word firmamentum to translate stereoma.

This mistranslation of raqia that persisted for more than two millennia is a cautionary tale for us to be careful not to impose our understanding of cosmology onto the Bible.

John Wycliffe completed the first English translation of the Bible in the late 14th century. Wycliffe translated from the Vulgate, not the original languages of the Bible. Wycliffe transliterated the Latin word *firmamentum* into English as "firmament," thus coining a new English word. Why did Wycliffe do this rather than properly translating *raqia* as "expanse?" There were at least two reasons.

First, Wycliffe did not know Hebrew, so he probably didn't know about the word *raqia*, nor did he know its meaning. Consequently, Wycliffe relied upon Jerome's translation, and he knew Latin, so Wycliffe probably thought his transliteration was the best way to render the Latin word *firmamentum*.

The hard, clear celestial sphere model was still the dominant cosmology in Wycliffe's day, and it would continue to be so for two to three more centuries. Wycliffe likely found this translation consistent with the cosmology he believed.

It wasn't until the 20th century that the more correct "expanse" began to show up in English translations. **This mistranslation of raqia that persisted for more than two millennia is a cautionary tale for us to be careful not to impose our understanding of cosmology onto the Bible. It is alright for us to express what we think the meaning is in terms of our cosmology, but we must not impose any meaning onto the Bible.**

Another consideration is what the word heaven means. Immediately we have a problem, because the Hebrew word for "heaven," shamayim, is a dual form, having no difference between the singular and plural. But in English there is a difference between the singular and plural forms of heaven, so it is the sense of the translator to decide whether "heaven" ought to be plural or singular in any given verse. Heaven refers to everything above us. As such, ***the word heaven seems to have three distinct meanings in the Bible. What many people consider to be the first heaven is where the birds and clouds are.*** A good example of this is the description of the "birds of the heavens" found in Genesis 1:26, 28, and 30, though in some translations the less literal "air" is substituted for "heaven." ***What people often call the second heaven is where the astronomical bodies are.*** Examples of this would be the giving of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 22:17). ***The third heaven is the abode of God. This is the meaning that the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:2 that he was caught up to the third heaven (Paul's term).***

At the risk of imposing our modern cosmology, we might understand the first heaven to be the atmosphere and the second heaven to be space. And we likely would think that the third heaven is beyond the physical world that we know. But is this the true meaning of these three? Where does the atmosphere end and space begin? There is no definite line of demarcation between the two. Therefore, we cannot say where the first heaven ends and where the second heaven begins. Nor could ancient people, including the Hebrews. They seemed to have understood there was a difference between the first and second heavens, but they didn't seem to be concerned with the question of exactly where the boundary between the two laid. The Hebrews probably didn't have difficulty with this fuzzy distinction, but we moderns tend to be too precise for our own good sometimes. As for whether the third heaven is physical and just beyond the first two heavens, the ancients didn't seem to have a problem with ambiguity there either, though we moderns seem to have some difficulty with it.

Which heaven does the day two account of Genesis 1:6–8 refer to? That is not entirely clear. It would not seem to mean the third

heaven. It could refer to either the first or second heaven, both, or portions of the two.

With these caveats in mind, let us consider the possibilities of what the expanse is and hence what the waters above are. A half-century ago, most recent creationists subscribed to the canopy model, the belief that the expanse is the earth's atmosphere with the waters above being in a sort of canopy over the atmosphere. **The canopy model hypothesized that the water canopy collapsed at the time of the flood (the “windows of heaven” being opened at the beginning of the flood per Genesis 7:11 and 8:2). We don't see these waters above now because the canopy no longer exists. While some creationists still support the canopy model, most creation scientists do not, nor do most major creation ministries, such as Answers in Genesis.** Why has support for the canopy model eroded? There are two primary reasons. One reason is that despite much effort expended to make a physical model of the canopy viable, no such working model was ever produced. More importantly, **the canopy model has some scriptural problems. For instance, Psalm 148:4 speaks of the waters above the heavens as if they still exist. Psalm 148 was almost certainly written after the flood, so why would it mention waters above the heavens if those waters are not there anymore?**

Another possibility is that “waters above the heavens” simply refers to atmospheric water, water that is continually recycled via the hydrologic cycle through evaporation and precipitation. The problem with this answer is that the water in the atmosphere is hardly above the heavens...This does not seem to comport with the day four description (three times) of the heavenly bodies being in the expanse of heaven, with the terminology “expanse of heaven” apparently referring to what God made on day two. How could atmospheric water be said to be above the place where the sun, moon, and stars are?

This leaves the possibility that the waters above the expanse are beyond the realm where we find astronomical bodies. This would imply that there is a shell of water surrounding the universe. What form (solid, liquid, or gas) would this water take? Considering that, just like English, there are Hebrew words for ice and water vapor, the use of the Hebrew word for liquid H₂O means liquid water, so we ought to conclude that this water is liquid. **A shell of water around the universe would not be possible if the universe were infinite, so the universe must have a finite size.**

Modern cosmologists who reject biblical cosmology are split on whether the universe is finite or infinite. But there is something even more profound here. For there to be water at the edge of the universe, the universe must have an edge. The universe having an edge is anathema to modern cosmologists.

Implications and Conclusion

To sum up, the cosmology of the day two and day four accounts suggests that the expanse God made on day two is what we would call space, but it likely includes most, if not all, the atmosphere as well. There is water at the boundary of the universe. This means that the universe is finite, has an edge, and the earth may be near the center of the universe.

<https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/cosmology/what-were-waters-day-two/>

Day three (vv. 9–13)

Genesis ⁹Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. ¹³There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God gathered the waters and caused the dry land to appear, thus making “earth” and “seas.” ...For the second time, God said that what He had done was “good” (v. 10; “light” being the first, v. 4).

God also caused plant life to appear on the earth: the grasses, the seed-producing herbs, and the fruit-bearing trees.

God decreed that each would reproduce “after its kind,” which helps to make possible order in nature. God has set reproductive limits for both plants and animals (Gen. 1:21) because He is the Lord of Creation. There’s no suggestion here of any kind of “evolution.” ***God was preparing the earth for a habitation for humans and for animals, and the plants would help to provide their food. A third time, God said that His work was good (v. 12).***

God Fills (1:14–27; 2:7)...God has now created three special “spaces”: the land, the seas, and the expanse of the sky. During the next three creative days, He will fill these spaces.

To be continued next week, Lord willing