

April 10, 2005 AM

**DAY 2: THE GREAT EXPANSE**  
**GENESIS 1:6-8**

**1. THE CREATION OF THE EXPANSE (6-7)**

“and God said”: God’s powerful word precedes and produces all that comes to be.

Light/Day & Darkness/Night - the beginning of God’s structuring of the world that he has created. Firmament continues structuring.

• ***What is the expanse or firmament?***

Common English translation = “firmament.” Built upon LXX translation and Latin Vulgate (*firmamentum*).

Gives the idea that this was a “firm” or “solid” structure. Some believe there is a solid “vault” that surrounds the earth.

Hebrew word gives no indication that this is a “solid” substance. In fact, the constellations reside within the *raqia’* this “space” that God created.

**Ezekiel 1:22, 26** - vision of God’s traveling throne room. Throne sits above the *raqia’* through which Ezekiel can see.

Now, in normal English parlance “firmament” is thought of as “the sky” or “the heavens” in general. So no problem if remembered.

*raqia’* as “expanse” - The *raqia’* is the open space from earth upward in which the clouds, sun, moon and stars reside. This is the sky, atmosphere and outer space. It can refer to any of these three areas of creation.

E.g., the windows of heaven (what the firmament is eventually called; cf. **1:8**) are opened; e.g., **Gen 7:11**. This is, no doubt, the clouds which give rain (cf. **Deut 28:12; 1King 18:44-45**).

God “stretches out” the heavens. Cf. **Psalm 104:2; Isa 40:22; Jer 10:12; 51:15; Zech 12:1**

The firmament becomes the tent in which the sun runs its daily course according to **Psalm 19**.

• ***What is the purpose of the expanse?***

The firmament is placed “in the midst of the waters,” separating the waters from the waters. Waters under and waters above (**1:7**).

God is dividing waters from waters, developing and structuring the world. Answering the *tohu*, unformed, nature of God’s initial creation in **1:2** is God’s setting things in their proper order. God is forming the unformed, structuring the unstructured.

Nature of initial creation: Water seems to have been the mass from which the order world emerges.

Waters below the expanse eventually became our seas and rivers.

The waters “above” the firmament:

**1)** A Water canopy - This view is that the waters that were placed above the firmament encircled the earth providing an ideal atmosphere.

**2)** Water in heaven (i.e., God’s throne room) - This is the thought that God took some of the water and placed it in his own throne room.

**3)** The waters above the firmament are the clouds and water vapor in the atmosphere.

Other Scriptures seem to indicate that when rain comes “the windows of heaven” are opened, indicating that the water flows from above heaven to earth.

*phenomenological* language: written from the perspective of how it is seen by the human eye. E.g., sun “rising” and “setting.”

Couple of things to notice: **a)** The covenantal nature of creation.

Creation is covenantal. When making covenants throughout Scripture, God speaks, he separates and he puts things in proper relationship to himself and with other things or people. E.g., **Gen 2**, first marriage; **Gen 15**, Abraham; sacrificial system; baptism.

God divides the waters from the waters, joining them in proper relation to one another.

Also, water can be both a blessing and a curse. Provides rain for crops and for judgment (e.g., Noah's day).

**b) God controls those things that threaten us and uses them for our good.**

The waters which would otherwise be a threat to our existence become the means of our deliverance.

## **2. THE NAMING OF THE EXPANSE (8)**

God's naming of the expanse declares his authority over it.

***The expanse is called "heaven."***: Calling the expanse "heaven" and his own throne room "heaven" is not just a lexical oddity but a purposeful correspondence.

Many other passages of Scripture make the connection between "the sky" and "the throne room of God."

"The fact that this firmament is called 'heaven' means that it is an image of the original heaven." (Creation in Six Days, 177-178)

Cf. e.g., **Ezek 1** - Ezekiel's vision of God's traveling throne room. This is the vision of the wheels within the wheels, the creatures, the clouds, the wind, the rainbow, etc.

God's throne room is then structured much like his created world.

Other images arise as we see that God's glory—the visible manifestation of God's presence—is likened unto a cloud (cf. **Exod 19:9ff.**; **40:35**; **2Chron 5:13-14**).

The firmament most certainly is a representative divider of heaven and earth. But the firmament itself has the impress of heaven upon it.

***The relationship between heaven and earth***: The firmament "geographically" reminds us that there is a separation between heaven and earth.

Heaven is not "up" in a spatial sense. But Biblically, journeying to God's throne room is always "up." And so, this is also why we read of "lifting up our eyes to heaven," the place where God is enthroned (cf. **Psalms 123:1**).

This is why we also read of Jesus' ascension into heaven as being an *ascension*, a going up into the clouds (cf. **Mk 16:19**; **Lk 24:51**; **Act 1:11**; **Heb 9:24**; **1Pet 3:22**).

Heaven is another dimension. It is not separated from us by *space* but by *nature*.

Heaven is really around us all the time. It is just that our eyes cannot see what is going on ... unless God pulls back the veil. Cf. **2Kings 6**; **Isa 6**; **Rev 4ff**.

God created the earth to be brought to its consummation. That consummation was the joining of heaven and earth so that earth perfectly reflects heaven.

This correlation between heaven in earth and the fact that the earth is to reflect heaven is depicted in part in the Tabernacle and Temple, in their structures as well as their functions. Moses *sees* the pattern in the Mt. (Cf. **Exod 25:40**; **26:30**; **27:8**; **Heb 8:5**).

In word and symbol in both structures we are told that we are separated from heaven. But Christ has passed through the veil—the firmament—and brought us into heaven with him and in himself joins heaven and earth (and will join them).

The second day does not have God's evaluation and word of judgment: "and saw that it was good." Not complete.

**Application: (1)** Learn to see God's glory in creation.