Biblical Earth Science and Astronomy

The Things the Bible Says About the Earth and About the Heavens

A 10-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These ten lessons are introductory level — the series is “kind of like” Biblical Earth Science and Astronomy Course 101 — on the things the Bible says about the earth and about the heavens God has created. It is not a study of geology or astrophysics. After the preliminary issues it turns to biblical earth science, then to biblical astronomy, and closes with the change at the flood and the change yet to come. God created by design, following a blueprint, and God first and foremost wants us to understand that the heavens and the earth are, as the lesson puts it, “one big building to him.” The best piece of science about the earth is to know why God created it — to be His residence in the midst of creation.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	God Created by Design, Following a Blueprint — Proverbs 3:19; Proverbs 8; Psalm 104; the Windows and Doors of Heaven
L2	Foundations, Pillars, Stories and Storehouses — Job 38, 9 and 26; Psalm 19; Amos 9; I Samuel 2: the Heavens a Curtain
L3	The Curtain of the Heavens and Three Heavens — Psalm 104; Acts 7; I Timothy 6; Ephesians 1 and 4; Revelation 4 and 6; Genesis 1; II Corinthians 12
L4	The Purpose of the Earth: God’s Residence — Job 37; Genesis 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:11; Isaiah 40; Psalm 68; Hebrews 11; Ezekiel 40
L5	Formed to Be Inhabited by Himself — Genesis 28; John 1; Revelation 21; Isaiah 45:18; Genesis 1:9–10; Psalm 95; Proverbs 8
L6	God Replicates His Third-Heaven Environment on Earth — Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28; Revelation 4 and 21; Psalm 148; Psalm 78: Mountains, Stones, Waters, Plants and Eden
L7	Paradise in the Third Heaven, Replicated in Eden — II Corinthians 12; Genesis 2:4–15; Ezekiel 28: the Eden Paradise Issue

Lesson	Core Focus
L8	From Void to Populated: Creatures with Heavenly Counterparts — Genesis 1:20–25; 2:19; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; II Kings 2 and 6; Psalm 68: Fowl, Living Creatures and Horses of Fire
L9	God's Stories in the Heaven: the Heavenly Places — Psalm 115; Amos 9:6; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21; Job 38; Daniel 10: the Closed Firmament and Its Ranks
L10	The Heavens and Earth of Old and Now — II Peter 3; Genesis 7:11; Job 38: Part A at the Flood, Part B in the Day of the Lord's Wrath

Lesson Summaries

L1

God Created by Design, Following a Blueprint *Proverbs 3:19; Proverbs 8; Psalm 104; the Windows and Doors of Heaven*

What This Series Is — and Is Not

- The series will not examine geology and the various kinds of rocks and minerals, nor astrophysics and spectral analysis of light coming in from the stars
- It looks at what the Bible says about the earth and the heavens God created; some things about them cannot be understood outside of God revealing them, and the answers to all the whys are resident within what He has done and what He says about what He has done

First Preliminary Issue: Creation by Design

- Creation was not a capricious act on God's part; it was all done by following a plan, a design and a blueprint God had drawn up — things in the earth and heavens are there because the blueprint called for them
- "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens": those two terms indicate a master plan being followed
- The earth is wisely placed and wisely sized the way God wanted it, with an environment wisely in line with the purpose God has for it; the same concept of design and purpose applies to the heavens

Proverbs 8: Wisdom at the Drawing Board

- Wisdom is personified and spoken of as a plan drawn up, like architect's drawings — as if God spent time at the architect's desk on the drawing board and had drawn up the plans
- This wise master plan was in existence before the things you see were in existence
- Setting a compass upon the face of the depth means God had a measurement already in view; He is not trying things out
- "Then I was by him": God is checking everything He does against the blueprint; "daily *his* delight" is one reason He says it is good in Genesis 1 — it fit the plan

One Big Building and the Habitable Part of His Earth

- God first and foremost wants us to understand that the heavens and the earth are one big building to Him; the Earth-science part of the study focuses on the habitable part of His earth
- The land given to Abraham was a particular portion of the habitable part of His earth that God chose for Himself — not a later choice, but one made in connection with the creation of the Earth
- The earth is His not only because He created it, but because He created it to be the place He would dwell in the midst of His creation

Second Preliminary Issue: Building Terminology

- This is really not language of accommodation; God is a maker and a builder, and there is reality to the pillars, windows, doors and stories of heaven
- Psalm 104: God wears light like a garment; the heavens are a curtain stretched out between the third heaven of God's own abode and the Earth, keeping the light on God's side from penetrating our side
- The windows of heaven are not cloud structure or a vapor canopy but part of the building structure of creation; at the flood water also came from a place called the windows of heaven, and they will be opened again in the day of His wrath (Isaiah 24)
- Windows and doors are two different things in God's understanding; in Revelation 4:1 one particular door was opened in heaven

L2

Foundations, Pillars, Stories and Storehouses *Job 38, 9 and 26; Psalm 19; Amos 9; I Samuel 2: the Heavens a Curtain*

Terminology With Reality Behind It

- The language-of-accommodation concept goes far beyond that; there is reality to these statements — the terminology accurately describes what God created and set in place
- God expects us to look at creation as a masterful building He has created, all designed literally to be a holy temple unto Himself

Job 38: God Built the Earth

- God tells Job, in effect, that He built the Earth; there was a line stretched upon it, and God Himself stretched it, as builders measure out a building's dimensions
- The foundations are fastened — the question to Job is where; the cornerstone is the benchmark stone from which all measurements are taken
- In the Lord's day of wrath, yet to come after this dispensation of Gentile grace is concluded, the Earth will reel to and fro because its foundations are gonna shake
- Those of the angelic realm saw God build and perceived the wisdom in it; the goal of this series is that a measure of that ought to be ours

Job's Frame of Reference (Job 9 and 26)

- God was not saying things to Job that Job had no frame of reference for; Job knew the earth had a place, and that the whole thing was one big building with pillars that trembled
- Job understood the earth hung on nothing, and that ordinances of heaven, though not visible, held it in its place and functioned as foundations
- "The chambers of the south" are rooms in the heavens; Paul's epistles speak of heavenly places, plural; pillars of heaven hold the levels of a multilevel

building together

Handiwork, a Tabernacle for the Sun, and Stories

- Handiwork is terminology used in connection with a carpenter; in the heavens is set a tabernacle for the sun — a particular place the sun lives
- "buildeth his stories in the heaven" (Amos 9:6): a building with stories to it — the earth's the ground floor of a massive building
- Judgment of His limited-size representative house at the beginning of the fifth course of punishment was a mini picture of judgment in the day of His wrath on the totality of His house of creation

Pillars of the Earth and the Treasures of the Snow

- Hannah (I Samuel 2:8) says the pillars of the earth are the Lord's; she understood God's plan and purpose with the earth and with creation as a whole
- The treasures of the snow and the hail are a place — storehouses of weapons God has reserved for the Lord's day of wrath

The Heavens Are a Curtain

- Psalm 104:1–3 describes the essentials of what God did in connection with Genesis 1:1–2; creation is not bathed in light because He stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and a curtain blocks out light
- The firmament keeps the light of God's heaven from penetrating and prevents us from seeing beyond it; this is not a discussion of what the stars are made of

L3

The Curtain of the Heavens and Three Heavens *Psalm 104; Acts 7; I Timothy 6; Ephesians 1 and 4; Revelation 4 and 6; Genesis 1; II Corinthians 12*

The Heavens Stretched Out as a Curtain

- Creating the heavens involved God stretching them out as a curtain; the earth is in the middle and the heavens surround it
- The curtain formed a barrier between God, covered with light as a garment, and the inside of the heavens; light doesn't transfer from beyond it through it
- God's all light and His realm beyond creation is all light; the curtain effect is multiplied when God divides the heaven realm He created

Openings in the Curtain (Acts 7; Revelation 4)

- Acts 7 is the third and final honest opportunity God gave Israel to change their mind about crucifying their Messiah; Stephen sees the Son of man standing on the right hand of God because God opened the heavens
- That signaled the fifth installment in Israel's fifth course of punishment was set to begin; revealed was the temporary suspension of His program with Israel, the mystery of Christ, the information about and for this dispensation of Gentile grace
- To get into the throne room in the third heaven John had to go through a door; structural issues built into the firmament function as doors and windows

Dwelling in Light (I Timothy 6; Ephesians)

- Christ dwells in the light of the glory of God where the Father is; the sun and stars don't give enough light to dispel the darkness within creation
- No man has seen Him because the curtain is there and God isn't opening the curtain in this dispensation of grace; anybody who says they have is an

outright liar

- He ascended up “far above all heavens” — plural — and the heavenly places with their governmental authorities are underneath Him

The Third Heaven Does Not Depart (Revelation 6)

- At the sixth seal John sees the heaven depart as a scroll, but the place where John is in the third heaven didn’t depart
- God’s heaven, it appears, is not, in God’s thinking, part of the heavens and the earth of creation; it existed before He created them

Darkness and Light (Genesis 1:2–3)

- The darkness of Genesis 1:2 is natural when the heavens have been stretched out as a curtain; though He has drawn the curtain, God creates light and brings it into this realm
- Angels need light to see, just like we do; God creates light so they can see what’s happening

Open Firmament, Closed Firmament, Three Heavens

- The second day divides the environment around the earth into the open firmament of the heaven and, by implication, the closed firmament
- The open firmament, which for now is referred to as our atmosphere, is where the fowl fly; “closed” is a word supplied here, used by implication for the section where the sun, the moon, the stars are — a double curtain concept
- Picking up Paul’s nomenclature (II Corinthians 12): the open firmament is the first heaven, the closed firmament the second; the third heaven is God’s own realm, all light, with paradise a particular spot in it

L4

The Purpose of the Earth: God’s Residence *Job 37; Genesis 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:11; Isaiah 40; Psalm 68; Hebrews 11; Ezekiel 40*

The Sky, Which Is Strong (Job 37)

- Elihu speaks of the greatness of God as the creator; he is correct in these things, but it’s still not the counsel Job needs
- The sky in view is not just the atmosphere, the first heaven, but the heavens as a whole; it is called a firmament, and it has strength, substance and solidity — a vacuum and a void carries a lot of weakness
- The how’s and the why’s can’t be answered but by the who who did it; God is not communicating by language of accommodation and figures of speech

As a Molten Looking Glass

- A looking glass is a mirror; the barrier curtain out to the second heaven functions like a mirror as well
- The mirror effect gives the illusion that it is endless, like a mirrored wall; instead of a new star appearing, you may just be seeing the reflection off that mirror
- Elihu and Job knew about this; oftentimes Christians don’t

Why God Created the Earth

- Beyond Genesis 1:1 the focus is on the Earth, because God is writing His book for man created on the Earth
- The Earth is the most important piece of real estate to God because of His plan and purpose for it; the key central issue in biblical Earth science is why

the Creator created it

The Spirit Fluttering over One Spot

- The earth didn't become without form and void; it was that way, and God deliberately started it off that way, doing it over a period of six days for the angelic realm that's up there with Him
- Deuteronomy 32:11 uses the same verb as Genesis 1:2; "fluttereth" is not the eagle flying all over the territory — the nest is in view, one particular spot
- God through His Spirit is laying the beams of His chambers in the waters — like driving pilings into the terra firma — foundation material for a big building complex to come down on
- His chambers are up with Him in the third heaven; His intention is to bring that down and set up His residence on the Earth

A Tent to Dwell In (Isaiah 40)

- In a rebuke to Israel, Isaiah declares the fifth course of punishment is on its way; the heavens are spread out "as a tent to dwell in" — not for other people, but for Him

The Hill of God and the City Abraham Looked For

- The spot God chose for His house is within the border confines of the land given to Abraham and his seed; the beams for God's chambers are at the hill of God (Psalm 68)
- Abraham was not looking to go to heaven; he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God — the heavenly Jerusalem
- Something postponed God bringing His chambers down onto the beams; Ezekiel sees the frame, with the beams exposed, but never the city, because it comes down out of heaven

L5

Formed to Be Inhabited by Himself *Genesis 28; John 1; Revelation 21; Isaiah 45:18; Genesis 1:9–10; Psalm 95; Proverbs 8*

Replicating the Third-Heaven Environment

- God formed the earth to be inhabited by Himself in particular; in forming it He was replicating, duplicating the environment He has with Himself in the third heaven
- He works with materials of the same kind He has in the third heaven, consistent with His plan and purpose to move His very residence onto this earth

Genesis 28: Heaven's Business Conducted from the Earth

- Jacob sees in visual form the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant: he sees a ladder set up, extending itself up to heaven, and the angels' place of origin and return is the earth
- "This place" is not the third heaven but the particular spot on the earth; heaven's business is gonna be conducted from the earth, with God's headquarters in that very land
- God is not introducing something brand new contrary to His original purpose for the earth; He is setting forth the mechanical means in view of the work of the usurper in Genesis 3

John 1 and Revelation 21: The Purpose Fulfilled

- In the gospel accounts the King would function first as the Redeemer, then in the day of His wrath as Israel's deliverer and avenger; then He establishes

Himself as the King and functions as Israel's blesser

- Nathanael will see the very thing Jacob was given to see — but not until this dispensation of grace, brought in unprophesied and unexpectedly, is concluded and God resumes His program with Israel
- John sees the heavenly Jerusalem, built in the third heaven, come down; its materials exist there just as they exist here on the earth, and the city can come down and not look out of place, and it turns that land into the heavenly country

Without Form and Void; Isaiah 45:18

- God didn't bring it all into effect by fiat because the angelic realm was observing Him; over six days, Genesis 2 tells you, He worked like builders from the architect's drawings
- Without form means no feature-full shape; void means like an empty place; it doesn't say the earth "became" — the gap theory is contrary to the natural reading of Genesis 1
- "He formed it to be inhabited" is taken at the end of creation, day six, not day one — inhabited not simply by men but by Himself; in their moaning and groaning it's as if Israel were forgetting what God created the earth for

Genesis 1:9–10: His Hands Formed the Dry Land

- The waters were gathered unto one place, not multiple places; when His hands formed the dry land, He formed hills and mountains
- "In his hand" (Psalm 95) is in the sense of possession: He has the right as creator, and He also repossessed the earth and became its rightful possessor by victory

Features on the Blueprint (Proverbs 8)

- The fountains abounding with water were on the blueprint; there are waters, dry land, plants, stones and metals in the third heaven with Him, as there are on the earth
- The environment now created on the earth is ready for the heavenly Jerusalem to come down to its counterpart environment and for Him to take up His residence

L6

God Replicates His Third-Heaven Environment on Earth *Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28; Revelation 4 and 21; Psalm 148; Psalm 78: Mountains, Stones, Waters, Plants and Eden*

Replicating His Environment on the Earth

- The shaping, forming and environmental decoration of the six days of creation and making is God replicating His environment in the third heaven on the earth, consistent with His plan and purpose to establish His residence on it
- No passage in the Bible is dedicated to describing what the third heaven is like; the earth's appearance has been effaced by sin, corruption and the satanic plan of evil, but not erased
- Enough of the image of heaven remains on the earth to appreciate what the third heaven is like; understanding God's purpose for the earth, you appreciate that the earth looks like the third heaven

Mountains with God (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28)

- In Isaiah 14 one of the thrones Lucifer speaks of is on a mountain in the third

heaven, not on the earth; the Most High has three thrones there in connection with the three persons of the Godhead

- That mountain has a name — "the mount of the congregation" — where the congregation of the angels takes place and God has a throne of accountability; the name indicates other mountains up there
- The throne of His worship was on "the holy mountain of God" (Ezekiel 28:14), also in the third heaven; God brings forth mountains and hills on the earth because He has them with Himself there

Stones of Fire and Precious Stones (Ezekiel 28)

- When Ezekiel 28 describes Satan in "Eden the garden of God", with the stones of fire and the holy mountain, it is in the third heaven; the stones of fire are real stones
- God made Lucifer's covering out of the materials His own residence was made of; the stones listed are common earthly precious stones and common third-heavenly precious stones

The Heavenly Jerusalem and the Throne Room (Revelation 21 and 4)

- God is going to bring His residence down onto the earth in the land of Israel; the materials of the heavenly Jerusalem existed in the third heaven before God created the earth
- John can describe the city because it has materials the earth has also; the wall was of jasper — not just like it — and the twelve gates were twelve pearls
- In God the Father's throne room John sees things in the third heaven he is very familiar with: a rainbow; metal someone worked and made, showing craftsmanship; lightnings and thunderings — so there must be clouds up there; gold, combustible materials, and glass made of sand, things we have on the earth

Waters and Plants in the Third Heaven (Psalm 148; Psalm 78)

- The "waters that *be* above the heavens" (Psalm 148) are not the clouds around the earth but waters in the third heaven; water features on the earth match water features there
- Creation has the capacity to glorify God and will do it; as saved people we get to be part of that and an instrument for its orchestration
- There are plants in the third heaven: a matching incense, same recipe, that the angels use; palms — palm trees up there; linen from flax; and the tree of life, which came from up there and will be on the earth again
- Manna is "the corn of heaven" (Psalm 78), the grain of heaven; the angels grow and tend it, and there are fields up there

Eden, the Garden of God

- Earthly Eden, where God planted the garden eastward, replicated the section of the third heaven called Eden with His garden and palatial residence in it — the place Paul cites in II Corinthians 12, Paradise

L7

Paradise in the Third Heaven, Replicated in Eden *II Corinthians 12; Genesis 2:4–15; Ezekiel 28: the Eden Paradise Issue*

Taking God's Word in Order

- Taking God's Word in the order in which He gave it gives you a biblical theology; Christians at best often have a verse-here, verse-there theology

- God talks about both the third heaven and the earth as His habitation; there is an Eden up there, a garden of God up there, and that is what people need to understand

Paul Caught Up into Paradise (II Corinthians 12)

- Paul was caught up to God's very realm, the third heaven — not simply the atmospheric heaven or the closed firmament of the second heaven
- The third heaven is made up of a lot of places and buildings; Paul identifies the particular place as paradise — he was "caught up into paradise" and "heard unspeakable words"
- Some say God moved paradise from the earth to the third heaven; it did not move up — God has always had paradise there, and it was replicated down here

Genesis 2 Loops Back to the Sixth Day

- Genesis 1 goes through the six days in a scope manner; verse 31 ends the sixth day, and Genesis 2:4 loops back to the sixth day to amplify things that occurred on it
- On the sixth day God replicated on the earth the paradise He has in the third heaven, naming the place Eden — the very name He has up there; the angels were being educated in exactly what He was doing
- Genesis 2:8 is the first time the word Eden appears; the garden is a portion of a large district called Eden, and the understanding here is that the district corresponds to the size He has up there with Himself in the third heaven

The Lord Planted a Garden Eastward in Eden

- On the third day God commanded the earth to bring forth; here the Lord — Adonai Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself — is on the earth, and "planted" is gardening terminology
- Adam, already in existence, watches this; in the third heaven God is the landscaper, the gardener, the horticulturist, garnishing the grounds around His place with the garden He made
- Solomon created a paradise around his palatial residence (Ecclesiastes 2), and the paradise word translates the king's forest in Nehemiah; that is what a paradise is, what a garden is
- Adam watches God making this place of R&R, so to speak, for the monarch of the earth who is going to be ruling with Him; man is to carry out the administration of God's will and dominion on the earth

The River, the Decreed Place, and Dressing the Garden

- The river goes out of Eden, waters the garden and parts into four heads; in a judgmental action God's decreed place was broken up, and waters of the sea are there now that were not there originally
- The Lord took the man and put him into the garden; to dress something is to adorn it the way you want

"Eden the garden of God" (Ezekiel 28)

- The prince of Tyrus is a man, but the king is or was an anointed cherub; Satan was in the Genesis garden, but there in the guise of the serpent, as chapter three indicates
- "Eden the garden of God" in Ezekiel 28 is the paradise in the third heaven — the one Paul was caught up to; the one on the earth was a replication of it

L8

From Void to Populated: Creatures with Heavenly Counterparts *Genesis 1:20–25; 2:19; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; II Kings 2 and 6; Psalm 68: Fowl, Living Creatures and Horses of Fire*

From Void to Populated (Genesis 1:20–25)

- The earth was not simply without form; it was also void — empty; God would form it to be inhabited, it would not be void any longer, and He would take up His residence on it
- Beginning in Genesis 1:20 the earth goes from being void to being populated; the word create is still used on the fifth day, and God gives the moving creatures a command they have the capacity to respond to
- The fowl fly in the "open firmament of heaven", the first heaven; beyond that is closed, and they do not fly in the closed firmament

No Contradiction in Genesis 2:19

- Genesis 2:19 can appear to be a contradiction that Bible scoffers grab hold of; it is a perfect example of people not paying attention to the context
- In chapter 2 the Lord loops back to the sixth day and, within the district He called Eden, forms the fowl out of the ground in Adam's sight — another activity of creation for Adam on day six

Seraphims, Cherubims and the Living Creatures

- God had winged creatures that fly in the angelic realm before He created winged creatures that fly on the earth; the seraphim and cherubim angels have wings and can fly
- The seraphims of Isaiah 6, above the throne of God, each had six wings; the cherubims, associated with the very presence of God, have four in Ezekiel — both prophets recognize them as wings
- The living creatures existed before man yet have the likeness of a man; when God created the eagle, He created a creature with the appearance of the fourth face on one of those beasts
- When God created the lion there was already an angelic creature whose face was like a lion; earthly creatures replicate the appearance and capacities of creatures God already had with Him in the third heaven

Horses of Fire in the Angelic Realm (II Kings 2 and 6)

- Scripture several times speaks of horses in the angelic realm — not horses of flesh, and twice called horses of fire; when the horse of flesh was created on day six, there were already horses in the third heaven
- Elijah's removal takes place by angelic action, and the chariot of fire and horses of fire are real; "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" is part of Michael the archangel's band protecting the nation Israel
- In II Kings 6 the greater host is the angelic army, with angelic chariots and angelic horses; God already had horses of fire, horses of spirit, in the angelic realm — He likes horses

He "rideth upon the heavens" (Psalm 68; Habakkuk 3; Revelation 19)

- Psalm 68, Habakkuk 3 and Revelation 19 deal with the same event: the great and terrible day of the Lord, when He returns to vanquish Israel's enemies; riding upon the heavens, He rides a white horse that is the Lord's
- The horses of flesh created on the sixth day of creation had their counterpart in the third heaven before they were ever created

Earth Modeled After Heaven

- The first essential piece of knowledge in basic earth science is that the earth

is designed and purposed by God to be His residence; understanding this lets us appreciate what the third heaven is like

- The dispensation of Gentile grace is in effect now, and if it continues long enough we will die before the rapture; this gives appreciation for what those who have died in Christ are experiencing, absent from the body, present with the Lord

L9

God's Stories in the Heaven: the Heavenly Places *Psalm 115; Amos 9:6; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21; Job 38; Daniel 10: the Closed Firmament and Its Ranks*

Biblical Astronomy: the Closed Firmament

- This series is introductory — Biblical Earth Science and Astronomy Course 101; the study now turns to the biblical astronomy aspect, focusing especially on the heavenly places
- The word closed is supplied here: Genesis 1 has the open firmament of heaven around the earth, where the fowls fly, which indicates that beyond that is closed
- The realm of the sun, moon, stars and planets, bounded by the curtain effect and mirror effect, is the second heaven; God sealing that area off was a protection for the earth and for men on it

"the heavens, *are* the LORD'S" (Psalm 115:16)

- Psalm 115 is in the final book of the Psalms, to Israel about God's program with Israel; verse 16 bears on the fact that we have limited knowledge from God about the second heaven
- Israel is God's nation on this earth with the earthly inheritance He promised them; God says very little about the heavenly places except where they bear directly on the earth — a drop in the bucket compared to what He says about the earth
- In our epistles, Romans through Philemon, with the revelation of the mystery of Christ, some things about the heavenly places can now be talked about freely

He "buildeth his stories in the heaven" (Amos 9:6)

- In Amos 9:6 stories means the stories of a building; as Noah's ark had lower, second and third stories, the universe has three basic stories — the first, second and third heavens
- Within each enumerated heaven there are also layers or stories; the second heaven has various levels or stories out to the curtain effect, and Paul talks about the ranks of governmental authority occupied by angelic beings in the heavenly places

Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers (Colossians 1; Ephesians 1)

- God's goal with Israel is the repossession of the earth from the usurper; the revelation of the mystery declares He will repossess the heavenly places too — Satan sealed his doom by his own pride because God kept a secret
- In Colossians 1:16 the visible are on the earth, the invisible in the closed firmament; "thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" are positions of governmental authority, just as real as their counterparts on the earth
- In Ephesians 1:21 "every name that is named" means titles given to positions; there are at least five recognized territorial ranks — principalities, powers,

thrones, mights and dominions

- There is more than one principality out there, more than one power, throne, might, dominion; the understanding here is that there would be at least twelve principalities
- The expression seventh heaven comes from the Greeks, used before, during and after Paul's day; but the reality of the stories with governmental ranks of authority is true, and the angelic beings in those positions are Satan's

The Way, the Empty Place, and the Lowest Parts of the Earth

- God asks Job not where light dwells but where "the way" is (Job 38:19); getting there means passing through territories ruled by a principality — in Daniel 10 there was a way that Gabriel had to travel, and the prince was the prince of the principality named Persia
- The "empty place" of Job 26:7 is a place out in the heavens with no stars, where darkness dwells
- The "lowest parts of the earth" (Psalm 139:15) does not mean the pit of hell: the earth is furthest from where God is, and by its shape is a model of the entire creation

L10

The Heavens and Earth of Old and Now *II Peter 3; Genesis 7:11; Job 38: Part A at the Flood, Part B in the Day of the Lord's Wrath*

A Change Taken Place and a Change Yet to Come

- The change that has taken place came with the judgment of the flood; the earth was its focal point but not its sole recipient — the heavenly places felt effects of it too
- The day of the Lord's wrath plunges the earth back into the situation of the first day of creation, without form and void, and God then reshapes and reworks new heavens and a new earth

Peter Writing to the Remnant (II Peter 3)

- In II Peter, Peter writes to the members of the remnant of Israel with the 5th installment of the 5th course of punishment — the day of the Lord's wrath — in view
- The scoffers of II Peter 3:4 aren't denying creation: they believe in creation and know the fathers, but scoff at the promise of the Lord's coming; taking them otherwise is out of context
- Their problem is a denial of what the prophets said, developing from ignorance of the intervening dispensation of grace that has suspended their program; the information is right in front of them, but they are willingly ignoring it

Part A and Part B Against Ungodliness

- Peter describes the Lord's judgment upon the ungodliness of this world in two stages: part A took place at the flood, and part B is the day of the Lord's wrath
- The issue in the satanic plan of evil is ungodliness, not just unrighteousness; the day of the Lord's wrath deals with all three aspects of ungodliness all at once

The Heavens and Earth of Old and Which Are Now

- From creation until Noah's day are the heavens and earth of old; God did not annihilate them and recreate brand-new ones, but an alteration took place

that would prevent that kind of world from existing again, at least on the same scale

- At the flood God made a reservation: “the heavens and the earth, which are now” are “reserved unto fire” (II Peter 3:7) — part B of God’s judgment against the ungodliness of men

The Flood’s Alterations (Genesis 7:11; Job 38)

- Genesis 7:11 speaks of two realms: “the fountains of the great deep” on the earth, and “the windows of heaven”, out of which came water
- The treasures of the snow and of the hail are up there with the waters of the third heaven; at the flood the waters came through the windows on high as snow and hail, affecting things in the heavens and doing damage to the earth
- In breaking up His decreed place at the flood, God changed the geography of Eden; marks and scars are left so that the world that then was can’t exist again

Part B: the Heavens and Earth That Are Now

- When the day of the Lord’s wrath comes following this dispensation of grace, with the resumption of God’s program with Israel, the heavens and earth that are now will suffer again; the windows on high open again
- In Job 38:12–15 the high arm is the usurper, Satan himself, and the sun is what breaks it; right now they are sweet influences, but they are going to cease; those ordinance powers of heaven shall be shaken and the sun will take hold of the ends of the earth
- Following that judgment, with the kingdom established on the earth, God creates new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65 and 66); the details are left for class 201
- In the dispensation of the fullness of times the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the imperial head over all the governmental authorities in the heavens and the earth (Ephesians 1)

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Building Terminology, Not Language of Accommodation

Building terminology for the earth and the heavens is not language of accommodation: God is a maker and a builder, and the foundations, pillars, windows, doors and stories are descriptive of the building the heavens and the earth are. The heavens of creation are a curtain stretched out between the third heaven of God’s own abode and the earth; they keep the light on God’s side from penetrating our side and keep us from seeing through to His side. There needs to be an opening in the curtain to go from the earth into God’s residence; God opened the heavens for Stephen, but no man has seen Christ dwelling in light because the curtain is there and God isn’t opening it in this dispensation of grace.

The Three Heavens

Following Paul’s nomenclature from II Corinthians 12: the open firmament is the first heaven, the closed firmament (a word supplied here, by implication) the second heaven, and the third heaven is simply the

realm God dwells in — all light. Paul talks about God's own realm as the third heaven because he understood the things in the opening chapter of Genesis. The universe has three basic stories — the lower first heaven, the second heaven and the third — and within each of these heavens there are also layers or stories. God's heaven, it appears, is not, in God's thinking, part of the heavens and the earth of creation; it existed before them, and when the sixth seal is opened the place where John stands in the third heaven does not depart.

Open Firmament vs. Closed Firmament (Closed by Implication)

The second day gives a division and separation of the heaven environment around the earth. The firmament around the earth is divided into two realms: one called the open firmament of the heaven, and the rest — even though it is not called the closed firmament — "by implication" to be understood as the closed firmament of the heaven. The word closed isn't used; it is supplied here, by implication, for the section of the firmament where the sun, the moon and the stars are. The open firmament — for all practical purposes right now, our atmosphere around the earth — is where the fowl fly; they don't fly out in the closed firmament of heaven. The realm of the sun, moon, stars and planets, that has as its extremity the curtain effect and the mirror effect on our side of things, is the realm of the second heaven; there was some protection for the earth and for men on it in connection with God kind of sealing that area off, and the best thing man could ever do is to consider that area closed.

The Earth: God's Residence, His Third-Heaven Environment Replicated

The key central issue in biblical earth science is why the Creator created the earth: He created it to exist in the midst of His creation as the place of His residence. On the first day the Spirit of God laid the beams of His chambers in the waters; His chambers are with Him in the third heaven, and His intention is to bring them down and set up His residence on the earth. In forming the earth God replicated the environment He has with Himself in the third heaven — mountains and hills, waters, plants, precious stones, and Eden with His garden — so the heavenly Jerusalem can come down to its counterpart environment. Paradise did not leave the earth and get taken up; it was always in the third heaven, and the one on the earth was a replication of it. The image of heaven on this earth has been effaced, but it hasn't been erased.

The Heavenly Places: God's Goal with Israel and the Revelation of the Mystery

God says very little about the heavenly places, about that closed firmament (a word supplied here, by implication), except where they have a direct bearing upon the earth; compared to what He says about the earth, it is a drop in the bucket. In our epistles, Romans through Philemon, with the revelation of the mystery of Christ, some things said about the heavenly places can now be talked about freely. God's goal with Israel is the repossession of the earth from the usurper; the revelation of the mystery declares He will repossess the heavenly places from the usurper too. The thrones, dominions, principalities and powers of Colossians 1:16 are positions of governmental authority — the visible ones on the earth, the invisible ones in the closed firmament (by implication) of the heaven.

The Heavens and Earth of Old vs. the Heavens and Earth Which Are Now

Peter writes II Peter to the members of the remnant of Israel with the day of the Lord's wrath in view; the scoffers he deals with believe in creation but scoff at the promise of the Lord's coming. From creation until Noah's day are the heavens and earth of old; the world that then was perished, but God didn't annihilate the heavens and earth — an alteration took place so that kind of world could not exist again, at least on the same scale. At the flood God made a reservation: the heavens and earth which are now are reserved unto fire — part B of His judgment against ungodliness, the day of the Lord's wrath, which

comes following this dispensation of grace. Following the judgment of the heavens and earth that are now, with the kingdom established on the earth, God creates new heavens and new earth.

Key Scripture References

Genesis 1:1–2	The heavens stretched out as a curtain block God's light, so the darkness is natural; "the earth was" — it didn't become without form and void
Genesis 1:6–8, 14–20	The heaven around the earth divided: the open firmament, where the fowl fly, and by implication the closed firmament, where the sun, moon and stars are
Genesis 2:8	The garden is a portion of the district called Eden; God replicated the paradise He has in the third heaven in Eden and called it the very same thing
Genesis 7:11	Two realms emit water: the fountains of the great deep on the earth and the windows of heaven
II Kings 2:11	The chariot of fire and horses of fire are real; when the horse of flesh was created on day six, there were some horses up there in the third heaven
Job 26:7	Job understood the earth hung on nothing; the empty place is a place in the heavens with no stars, where darkness dwells
Job 37:18	The sky is "strong" — a firmament with substance; as a molten looking glass, the barrier out to the second heaven functions like a mirror and gives the illusion it is endless
Job 38:1–7	God built the earth; creatures who are part of the angelic realm saw God do it (verse 7)
Job 38:22–23	The treasures of the snow and hail are storehouses of weapons God has reserved for the Lord's day of wrath
Psalm 104:2–3	God covered Himself with light as a garment; the heavens stretched out like a curtain; the beams of His chambers laid in the waters on the first day
Psalm 115:16	Bears on the limited knowledge God gives about the second heaven, the closed firmament (a word supplied here, by implication)
Proverbs 8:22–31	Wisdom personified; it is as if God spent time at the architect's desk on the drawing board and had drawn up the plans; the compass set to a predetermined measurement; a special emphasis on the habitable part of his earth
Isaiah 14:13–14	Lucifer speaks of a mountain in the third heaven — the mount of the congregation, where God's throne is
Isaiah 24:18	The windows from on high open again in the day of the Lord's wrath, as at the flood
Isaiah 40:22	Part of a rebuke to Israel: the heavens spread out as a tent for Him to dwell in

Isaiah 45:18	“he formed it to be inhabited” — taken at the end of day six, not day one; inhabited by God Himself, not simply by men
Ezekiel 28:13–14	Eden the garden of God is the paradise in the third heaven, the one Paul was caught up to; the holy mountain of God and the stones of fire are in the third heaven also
Daniel 10:13	The prince of the kingdom of Persia is the prince of a heavenly principality, not the man on the earth
Amos 9:6	“he that buildeth his stories in the heaven” — a building with stories, the earth like the ground floor; the universe’s three basic stories
Acts 7:55–56	God opened the heavens so Stephen could see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God
II Corinthians 12:2–4	Paul’s nomenclature of the third heaven; paradise is the particular spot in it, always there
Colossians 1:16	Thrones, dominions, principalities, powers: positions of governmental authority, visible on the earth and invisible in the closed firmament (by implication)
I Timothy 6:16	No man has seen Him dwelling in light: the curtain is there, and God isn’t opening it in this dispensation of grace
II Peter 3:5–7	The world that then was perished at the flood; the heavens and earth which are now are reserved unto fire — part B
Revelation 21:10	The heavenly Jerusalem, built in the third heaven, comes down to the earth; God replicated His environment so it would not look out of place