

Stretching Out The Heavens

The Bible tells us that God created the world in six days. This is found not only in Genesis 1, but also in the book of Exodus as well:

Exodus 20:9-11: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The teaching here is simple. Just as God created the universe and everything within it in six days and rested on the seventh day, so God commanded the Israelites to rest on the seventh day. This means the universe was *not* created over billions of years. Instead it was created in just six days.

One interesting point we find taught in Genesis 1 is that God created the earth on day 1 (Genesis 1:1-5), the plants on day three (Genesis 1:9-13), and the sun, moon, and stars on day four (Genesis 1:14-19). God didn't create the stars, and then the earth, and then the plants. Instead He created the stars *after* the earth and its plant life. The reason God created the stars is so that they might be a blessing to the earth:

Genesis 1:14-18: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let

them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.”

God said that He created the sun, moon, and stars to give light to the earth. They were created to mark signs, and seasons, and days, and years. This means they were created *for our benefit!* The earth isn't some random planet in a vast and uncaring universe. Instead the rest of the universe exists *to serve the people of this world* (by providing light to the earth and marking seasons of time).

This does bring up a point. Astronomers tell us that stars are extremely far away. Since they were created to give light to the world, and since this universe was created about 6,000 years ago, how is it that we can see light from stars that are much more than 6,000 light years away?

There are a number of different ways this problem can be solved. Some people have suggested that the speed of light was much greater in the past than it is now. Others have suggested that perhaps time is flowing at different rates in other places in the universe; although only a few thousand years have passed on earth since the creation of the universe, perhaps far longer has passed elsewhere. Since it's impossible for us to travel to distant galaxies and run experiments, it's difficult to determine which theory is right.

However, the Bible may provide us with a clue. God tells us several times that He stretched out the heavens:

Psalm 104:2: “Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the

heavens like a curtain.”

Isaiah 40:22: “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:”

Isaiah 42:5: “Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:”

Isaiah 44:24: “Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;”

Isaiah 45:12: “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.”

Isaiah 51:13: “And forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?”

Jeremiah 10:12: “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by

his discretion.”

Jeremiah 51:15: “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.”

Zechariah 12:1: “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”

This isn't something that's mentioned in a single passage. Instead it keeps coming up as an act of God's supreme power and might. We're told that the stretching out of the heavens was an act of God's *discretion* and *understanding*. It was something that He did, and something that only He could do. God used His wisdom and His infinite power to stretch out the heavens. But why would He do that? Why did the heavens need to be stretched out? What purpose did that serve? Is it because they needed to be stretched out so that the stars and galaxies that He created could fulfill their divine purpose?

The word for “stretched” that is found in each of these verses is Strong's #5186 (“natah”). It means “to stretch out, extend, spread, incline, bend”.

I think this word may be a clue. It's possible the reason we can see the starlight from distant stars is because God bent the universe. The fact that God brought this point up so many times in so many places tells me that it's an important fact we shouldn't ignore. God did something amazing to the universe, and He wanted us to know that.