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Have Creationists Overlooked an Abundance of Biblical Cosmological Data?

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Abstract

Recently Faulkner has proposed that the "waters above" of Genesis 1:6–8 form a boundary beyond the farthest galaxies and that Genesis 1:1 is an introductory encapsulation of the events of Creation Week, rather than the first event in the sequence of God's creative activities. I examine arguments for and against these views and attempt to derive additional cosmological implications from the former. I also examine several scriptural passages that may be cosmologically relevant but which seem to have gone overlooked by many commentators. For instance, the Bible may give us clues regarding the location of God's abode, the large-scale spatial geometry of space, and hints as to whether our universe is expanding.

Introduction

The correct identification of both the "expanse" (Hebrew *raqîa'*) of Genesis 1:6–8 and the "waters above" the expanse are critically important issues in constructing a biblically based cosmology. Earlier creation scholars equated the expanse with Earth's atmosphere and the "waters above" with a pre-Flood vapor canopy (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961; Dillow, 1982). However, Humphreys (1994a, 1994b) has made a strong exegetical argument that the expanse is actually intergalactic space and that the "waters above" are a shell of water beyond the farthest galaxies. In addition, attempts by Rush and Vardiman (1990) and Vardiman and Bousselot (1998) to model the effects of a vapor canopy have been disappointing, as they suggest intolerably hot temperatures for Earth's surface.

In Humphreys' model, the space of our physical universe extends beyond this spherical shell of water (Figure 1). Humphreys (1994b, p. 65) referred to this space as the "second heavens" and argued that it is created and of finite extent. Humphreys has since modified his model somewhat, although to the best of my knowledge he has not published the newer version in the technical literature. It is not completely clear to me, based on the online description (personal correspondence cited in Hartnett, 2014) of the newer model, whether his revised model agrees with the proposal discussed below.

Recently, Faulkner (2016) has echoed Humphreys' suggestion. I find this proposal worth considering for several reasons.

First, the most natural understanding of Genesis 1:6–8 is that God divided the waters so that the waters above the expanse formed a spherically symmetric shell centered on Earth. If this is the case, and if the waters are a kind of boundary for our universe (as I will suggest here shortly), then it automatically follows that our physical universe

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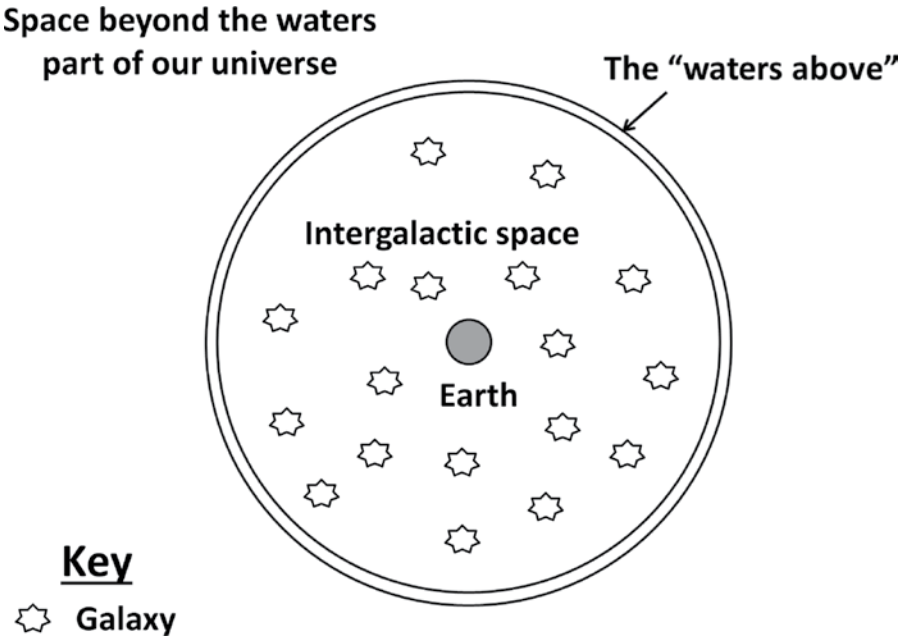

Figure 1. Humphreys (1994b) suggested that our physical universe extended beyond the "waters above" and that this space might or might not contain matter.

is finite in extent, which agrees (as noted by Humphreys, 1994b, p. 65) with I Kings 8:27:

> But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (KJV)

Humphreys (1994b, p.65) seems to have assumed that the "heaven of heavens" (also rendered as "highest heavens" in some translations) refers to interstellar space, but it could be that the "heaven of heavens" rather refers to the dwelling place of God (Heaven with a capital "H," if you will). If that is the case, then Heaven is of finite extent. If the "heaven of heavens" (Heaven) is of finite extent, then the smaller sidereal heavens would be, as well.

Second, if the shell is centered on the earth, as one would tend to assume, it would imply that the earth does indeed occupy a privileged place in the cosmos.

Third, as noted by Faulkner (2016), the waters might be the source of the cosmic microwave background radiation. In that case, it might be possible to make testable cosmological predictions.

Fourth, such a view would explain why these waters apparently still exist, even after the Flood (Psalm 148:4).

What is on the Other Side of the Waters?

However, this immediately raises another question. What is on the other side of the watery shell? In Humphreys' original model, the space of our physical universe extended *beyond* this spherical shell of water (Figure 1). However, this begs more questions. What would be the point of God establishing a space beyond these waters, which would seem to be inaccessible to us but which would (presumably) have not been part of the abode of God? Humphreys suggested that this space beyond the waters (which, again, would still be part of our universe) could contain matter (Humphreys 1994b, p. 65), but this seems somewhat problematic. Given that God wants us to know that He is the Creator of *all* things (Colossians 1:16, Revelation 4:11), why would He not explicitly tell us about His creation of this supposed matter beyond the waters? And if this space beyond the waters is devoid of matter, then what is the point for its existence?

Faulkner (2016) was careful not to speculate about what lay directly on the other side of the "waters above," and he has stated in a personal communication (Faulkner, 2016, personal communication) that the abode of God does not have to be directly on the other side of the waters. However, what if this truly is the case? What if the abode of God is *directly* on the other side of the "waters above" (Figure 2)? Here I present several arguments in favor of this view.

First, the idea of waters as a boundary between our universe and Heaven itself seems conceptually simple. In fact, in a private conversation with other creationists on this topic, someone suggested that the "sea of glass like unto crystal" described in Revelation 4:6 and Revelation 15:2 may refer to these waters but as described from *above*, from the point of view of Heaven's inhabitants. The simplicity of such a view is very appealing, and there is a certain "symmetry" to it. We are first introduced to these waters at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:6–8, but from our earthly perspective *under* the waters. We again see the waters at the end of the Bible, in Revelation 4:6, but this time from a heavenly perspective, *above* the waters. Other writers have also suggested a possible connection between "the waters above" and the crystalline expanse (Bassett 2011), although they may disagree on the details of that connection.

Second, such a view might also help to explain a passage that most of us probably have been hesitant to take literally:

> Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as

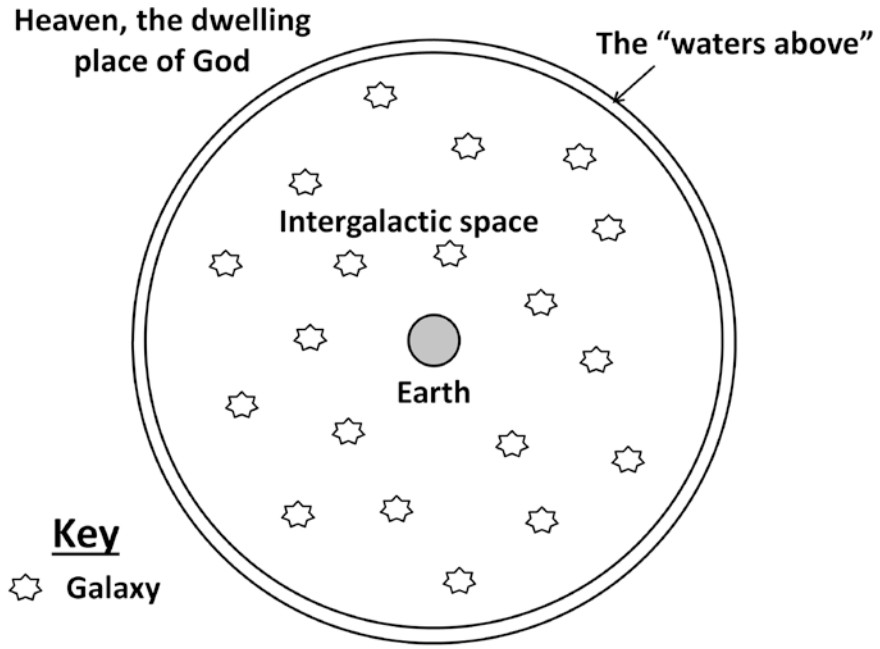

Figure 2. Do the "waters above" form a boundary between our universe and Heaven, the abode of God?

> with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: W*ho layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters*: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire. (Psalm 104:1–4, emphasis mine)

Although this language is indeed poetic, could it be revealing a literal truth? The tendency is to assume that the "waters" in Psalm 104:3 are the waters of the clouds. Parallelism is a major, if not defining, characteristic of Hebrew poetry and at first glance it is easy to assume that the statement that God "layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters" (v. 3) is parallel to the statement that He "maketh the clouds his chariot." Of course, the skeptic would dismiss this as a naïve, prescientific view that God's "house" is somewhere in the clouds.

But is the statement that God "layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters" parallel with the statement that God "maketh the clouds his chariot," or is it actually parallel with the preceeding statement that God "stretchest out the heavens like a curtain"? Note that this alternate grouping of parallel thoughts seems to make good overall sense:

> Thou art clothed with honour and majesty / Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment
>
> Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain / Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters
>
> Who maketh the clouds his chariot / Who walketh upon the wings of the wind
>
> Who maketh his angels spirits / His ministers a flaming fire

In that case, the waters would seem to refer to the waters above the *raqîa*' rather than to clouds. Thus, this statement, though expressed in poetic form, would be literally true, if God *really has* laid the beams of his heavenly chambers in the waters above the *raqîa*'.

Of course, one might object to such a literal understanding of the "chambers in the waters," since one could use the same reasoning to argue that God *literally* walks or travels through the atmosphere, an "obviously" nonsensical conclusion. But is it really nonsense? Does not Scripture repeatedly teach this? This idea is expressed poetically in many other passages (2 Samuel 22:11–12; Job 22:14; Psalm 18:11; 68:33; 97:2; Nahum 1:3). We can certainly safely say that such a statement *at least* applies to the Lord Jesus after his resurrection (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Acts 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7).

If this is the case, then this would imply that, fundamentally, there are just two "heavens," the 3-D space of our universe, and the abode of God. I tend to lean toward the idea that God created both these heavens at Genesis 1:1. In fact, the 3-D space of our universe may be of the same substance as the space of Heaven itself, an extremely interesting conclusion in its own right.

A Watery Divide Between Our Universe and Heaven? Possible Biblical Objections

Of course, the point made above immediately raises a potential objection: If there are only *two* heavens (the space of our physical universe and the abode of God), then why does Paul refer to the abode of God as the *third* heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–4)?

One possibility is that one could reasonably divide the physical space of our universe into two realms, the atmospheric heavens and the sidereal heavens, but one could also reasonably choose to "lump" them together. In fact, Faulkner (2016) has made the point that the distinction between the atmospheric and sidereal heavens is perhaps not as clear-cut as we tend to think.

J. Johnson (personal communication) has pointed out that Scripture

already does this with the concepts of *soul* and *spirit*. Some passages of Scripture seem to suggest that man has two fundamental parts, body and spirit (Ecclesiastes 3:19–21; 12:7; Zechariah 12:1; Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 8:55; 23:46; John 3:6; 6:63; Acts 7:59), but others suggest that man has three components, body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12). Indeed, Scripture itself suggests that it is difficult to distinguish between soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:12). Hence, the fact that Paul seems to refer to the abode of God as the *third* (rather than the second) heaven may not be a fatal objection to this view. It may be that one can reasonably claim that there are three heavens, or just two, depending on whether one chooses to make a distinction between the atmospheric and sidereal heavens.

A second objection is that the "sea of glass like unto crystal" described in Revelation 4:6 and the "sea of glass" described in Revelation 15:2 seem to be solid or crystalline, rather than liquid, yet the waters that would become the "waters above" were originally in liquid form, and presumably still are (Psalm 148:4). I don't have a "solid" answer to this (pun intended!), but it is possible that the waters are now in a frozen, rather than a liquid, state. Or, as one reviewer suggested, perhaps the "sea of glass" is only a small portion of the heavenly shell of water so that most of the water is in a liquid state, but not all of it.

Third, this view implies, as already noted, that God created both the sidereal heavens and the Heaven of his abode on Day 1 of Creation Week. Yet, there are verses in Hebrews that seem to suggest that Heaven, though created by God, is *not* part of our physical universe. Hebrews 9:11 says,

> But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.

Comparison of the above verse with Hebrews 9:24 makes it clear that this "greater and more perfect tabernacle" is the abode of God:

> For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Of course, one might worry that if Heaven is not part of our (created) universe, could it have been uncreated? This is a very disturbing possibility, as it would seem to suggest that something exists that God did not create, which seems to contradict Scripture (Colossians 1:16), especially because what we call "space" may be a substance of some kind. Fortunately, however, this disturbing possibility is ruled out by Hebrews 8:1–2, which makes it clear that Heaven itself, the third heaven, *was* created by God:

> Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, *which the Lord pitched, and not man*. (emphasis mine)

But that still leaves the question, *Is the abode of God part of our physical universe*? If the abode of God is part of the heavens created on Day 1, then the answer would seem to be *yes*. Yet Hebrews 9:11 seems to be saying *no*, and it is worth noting that the word used in Hebrews 9:11 is routinely rendered as *creation* in many other verses:

> But from the beginning of the creation [*ktisis*] God made them male and female. (Mark 10:6)
>
> For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation [*ktisis*] which God created unto this time, neither shall be. (Mark 13:19)
>
> For the invisible things of him from the creation [*ktisis*] of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)
>
> For the earnest expectation of the creature [*ktisis*] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature [*ktisis*] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature [*ktisis*] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:19–21)

I don't have a final answer to this difficulty, except to note that perhaps the abode of God ("the third heaven"), though also presumably created on Day 1, may perhaps still be considered "separate" from the sidereal heavens, due to the watery boundary between them. Indeed, it is worth noting that the word *ktisis* can be rendered "building," which seems to parallel the thought expressed by King Solomon in 1 Kings 8:27. In that case, it might not be incorrect to think of the third heaven as a separate structure or building of sorts, even though it is of the same substance as the substance of our 3-D space and was created on Day 1.

Is Genesis 1:1 an Introductory Encapsulation?

Faulkner also argues that Genesis 1:1 is what is known as an introductory encapsulation, which means that it could simply be an overview of the events of Creation Week rather than the very first event in that sequence of events. In that case the *raqîa'* did not exist until Day 2 (Faulkner 2016). I have some concerns with this view (stated below), although arguments have been made for it by conservative scholars (Faulkner 2016). However, I do not think that it is necessary to argue that Genesis 1:1 is an introductory encapsulation in order to conclude, as Faulkner does, that "the

waters above" lie beyound the farthest galaxies.

One concern has been pointed out by Humphreys (1994b, p. 65). If Genesis 1:1 is merely an overview of the sequence of events of Creation Week, rather than the very first event in that sequence, then God nowhere tells us explicitly in the Genesis account that He Himself created the matter that would eventually become the earth and other celestial bodies. This again raises the disturbing possibility that something in the cosmos is uncreated, which was a common theme in most, if not all, pagan cosmogonies (Morris, 1989).

Second, if Faulkner is correct that the physical space of our universe (the *raqîa'*) was not made until Day 2 of the Creation Week (Genesis 1:6–8), then how could the watery mass described in Genesis 1:1–2 even *exist* on Day 1? A mass needs *some* space in which to exist, and there are multiple clues within Genesis 1:2 that suggest a space of some kind was already in existence:

> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

The phrases "face of the deep" and "face of the waters" clearly imply spatial dimensions, which require a space of some kind. The same may be true for the phrase "without form and void." But if the expanse did not come into existence until Day 2, then what is the identity of the space that contained the watery mass of Genesis 1:2?

A third objection to the idea that the expanse came into existence on Day 2 is that Scripture says that God *made* the *raqîa'* on Day 2 rather than created it. If the expanse is equivalent to the entirety of the physical space of our universe and the expanse did not exist until Day 2, then it would seem more appropriate to use the Hebrew word for *create* (*bara'*), rather than *make* (*`asah*) to describe God's actions on Day 2 (Genesis 1:6–8). But the fact that God *made* the expanse seems to suggest that the space was already in existence on Day 1 and that God merely altered the space somehow on Day 2 to make (not create) the expanse. The most obvious possibility would be that on Day 2 God stretched the space created on Day 1 to make the *raqîa'*. However, as pointed out by Hartnett (2011), the verses commonly cited as evidence for such a "stretching" of space may not actually be claiming this.

Hence, I tend to think that Genesis 1:1 *must* be the first step in God's creative activities, although it could also simultaneously be an introductory encapsulation. However, I don't think that it can be *merely* an introductory encapsulation.

Do We Live in a Spatially "Flat" Universe?

Does the Bible give us a clue regarding the geometry of our universe? Ordinary Euclidean geometry assumes that parallel lines in our universe never converge or diverge. Likewise, in Euclidean geometry, the sum of the measures of the angles of a triangle must always be 180°. Such a case would correspond to a "flat" universe. But one can also have geometries in which this is not the case. For instance, Euclidean geometry does not hold on the surface of a sphere characterized by a positive spatial curvature. On a sphere, the sum of the measures of the angles of a triangle is greater than 180°.

Big bang cosmologists claim that our geometry is "flat," but this claim usually is based on big bang assumptions that creationists do not accept (de Bernardis et al., 2000).

However, Genesis 1 may be suggestive of a geometrically "flat" universe. Imagine that on Day 2 of Creation Week, the watery (and presumably spherically shaped) mass that will become the earth is bounded by a large imaginary box. Suppose we could observe God on Day 2 moving the "waters above" out billions of light-years to their current location. This could be done either by moving the waters themselves or by stretching or expanding the space between the waters. In my view, the latter is more likely, since God *made* the expanse on Day 2, which suggests that God actually *did something to the space* between the waters, rather than merely move the waters apart from each other *within the space*. Although the text does not explicitly say so, it seems reasonable to assume that the "waters above" remained in the form of a shell concentric with the earth as God moved "the waters above" to their new position. But in this case, the shell itself, at its new location, is bounded by another, even larger imaginary box. But here is the important point: for the shell to remain concentric with the surface of the earth, the six faces of the smaller box must each be parallel to one of the corresponding six faces of the larger box. And this implies that a 2-D "slice" through the 3-D space (Figure 3) will reveal lines that are tangent to the earth's surface at four locations, as well as lines that are tangent to the shell at four corresponding locations. And because the shell is presumably still concentric with the earth, the corresponding lines will be parallel. Since the faces of the largest box are literally at the very edge of the universe, this would imply that parallel lines in our universe never converge or diverge, which is a defining characteristic of a "flat" spatial geometry.

It might be possible, however, that Heaven itself, being possibly finite (1 Kings 8:27), does have a positive spatial curvature but we simply don't notice it, because our universe is too small (!) to notice this curvature if we stay inside the watery boundary.

Is the "Space" of Heaven the Same Substance as Interstellar Space?

If part of the heavens in Genesis 1:1 really is the "third heaven," the dwelling place of God, then this may have many

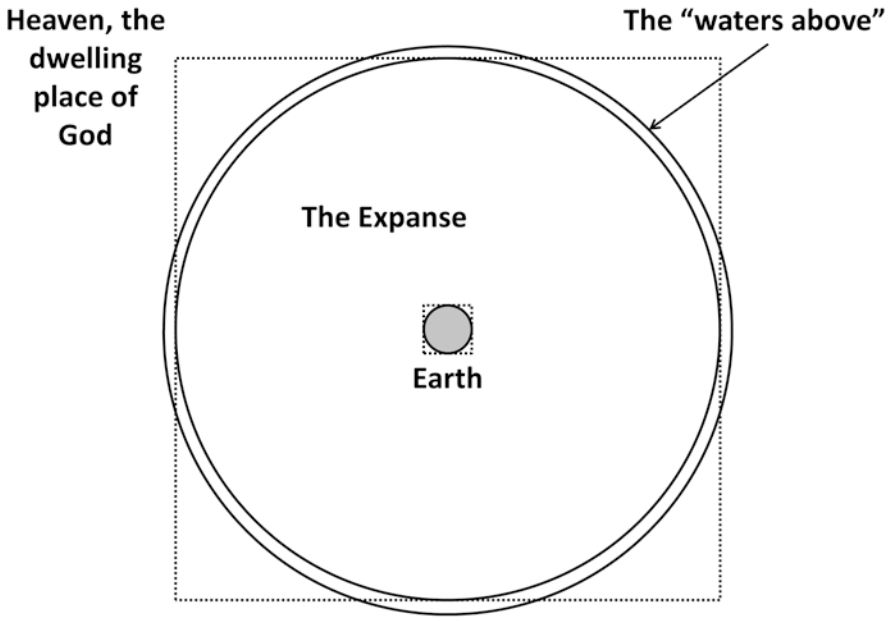

Figure 3. If the "waters above" were still concentric with the surface of the Earth after God moved them to their new location (Genesis 1:6–8), then both the Earth itself and the "waters above" could be contained within large imaginary boxes. The corresponding faces of the two boxes would be parallel, suggesting a "flat" spatial geometry.

significant physical implications. First, it might suggest that the space of God's abode is not that different from the physical space of our cosmos, although the space of our physical universe may have been stretched to form the *raqîa*'. As noted earlier, the two heavens may have been "blurred" together until God divided them with the "waters above." If the "stuff" of interstellar space is the same as the "stuff" of the space in Heaven, this has even more intriguing implications. Is the space-time of our physical universe the same as the space-time of Heaven itself? Does relativity theory apply in Heaven, as well as our universe?

However, one reviewer raised an interesting question: If I am suggesting that our universe is just a subset of the larger heavenly space (the space above the earth's surface), then what about the space *below* the earth's surface? What about the space inside the earth's interior? Specifically, what about hell? There is overwhelming scriptural evidence that the abode of the unsaved dead (hades or hell) is within the earth's interior, presumably at or near the center of the earth (Numbers 16:29–33; Psalm 86:13; 139:8; Proverbs 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:24; Isaiah 14:9, 15; Ezekiel 31:16–17; 32:27; Amos 9:2; Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15; and possibly 1 Samuel 28:11–15). Yet the earth's inner core is thought to be solid. How is this possible?

This may not be a serious objection, since spirits seem to be unhindered by physical objects, anyway. However, there is another factor worth considering. If God indeed made the *raqîa*' by stretching a preexisting space that He created on Day 1 of Creation Week, then it may be that this stretching was applied only to the portion of space *above* the earth's surface. Presumably the space *below* the earth's surface would *not* have been stretched (note that Genesis 1:6 seems to imply that the *raqîa*' does *not* extend below sea level). In that case, the space in the earth's interior may be similar to Heaven in that both are unstretched. This common feature might be a clue to explaining how spiritual beings can live in these spaces, even when the space coincides with a solid or liquid object (like the inner or outer core).

An Expanding Universe… or Not?

If the "waters above" form a boundary to our universe, does this rule out an expanding universe? If one assumes that the shell of waters serves as an interface between our universe and Heaven itself, then the waters must simultaneously be part of both our universe and the abode of God. If they are part of our universe, it would seem that the mass of the waters cannot increase or decrease, due to the fact that God (with the exception of some miracles) is no longer creating new mass/energy (Genesis 2:1–2; Hebrews 1:3). But if the waters are in a liquid or solid state, this implies that the *volume* of the waters cannot change, either (assuming minimal volume expansion or contraction due to temperature changes). Is it possible for the space of our universe to expand while simultaneously maintaining a constant volume for the shell of water that bounds it? Frankly, I have a hard time visualizing such a scenario. But if the answer to that question is *no*, this would seem to rule out the possibility of an expanding universe.

Although Humphreys (1994a, 1994b) originally argued that an expanding universe was implied by Scripture, Hartnett (2011) has since argued that such an idea cannot legitimately be extracted from the text, as the Hebrew word for stretch does not really have connotations of elasticity as we know it. Humphreys now agrees with Hartnett that these verses should *not* be used as proof texts for an expanding universe (Hartnett, 2014). This consideration

might represent one more argument against an expanding universe, which in turn would require re-interpretation of the redshift data.

Do We Live in a Rotating Universe?

It could be significant that the waters were separated on Day 2 *after* God had already initiated the day/night cycle on Day 1. This suggests that the watery mass that would become the earth was *already spinning* at the time the waters were separated. But the "waters above" were part of these already-spinning waters. Hence, unless the Lord somehow "braked" the rotation of the "waters above" as He moved them to their new location, they still would have been rotating after God separated them from the waters below, and might presumably still be rotating even today. However, some degree of braking might be a physical necessity, given that a water molecule at the edge of the visible universe, moving with a rotational speed of one revolution per day, would have a tangential speed well in excess of the speed of light. If one assumes that the space of Heaven is the same as the space of our universe, then relativity theory would presumably apply in both our universe and Heaven. Hence, a watery shell rotating at such a speed does not seem possible. On the other hand, if relativity theory does *not* apply at the shell's location or beyond, it might still be possible for such a shell to rotate at such high speed.

A Watery Origin for the Heavenly Bodies?

Humphreys (1983, 1984) suggested that God used water to construct the heavenly bodies, and his model has been spectacularly successful at predicting the magnetic moments of bodies within our solar system (Humphreys 1986, 1990a, 1990b, 2008, 2012). I here offer one possible additional tidbit of information deduced from the text. Note that the physical topography of the earth (including the locations of the oceans and continents) was already established by the end of Day 3 (Genesis 1:9–13), but the heavenly bodies were not created until Day 4 (Genesis 1:14–19). Hence, *if* God did indeed use water that was created on Day 1 to make the heavenly bodies, then it seems this water *must* have been taken from the "waters above" rather than from the "waters below" for two reasons. First, by the end of Day 3, the earth simply would not contain enough water to construct all the heavenly bodies, as it then had the same approximate size that it does now. Second, even if the earth *did* contain that much water by the end of Day 3, the removal of that water likely would have destroyed the topography the Lord had already established on Day 3. Hence, if God used some of the water created on Day 1 to make the heavenly bodies, it seems that He *must* have taken this water from the "waters above." Presumably He would have "sliced off" part of the watery shell at universe's edge, making the shell thinner while still maintaining its symmetric, spherical shape, and then used the water in that "slice" to make the heavenly bodies. However, perhaps God did *not* use the Day 1 water to create the heavenly bodies, which seems to now be the position held by Humphreys (2008).

Possible Physical Problems

Earlier I presented a possible scriptural argument against an expanding universe. But if one assumes that the universe is not expanding, wouldn't gravitational collapse make the universe unstable? Wouldn't it eventually collapse in on itself? Perhaps. But such a collapse would take billions of years and is of no meaningful consequence in a universe that is only ~6,000 years old. Hartnett has noted that biblical creationists do not necessarily have to assume stability of large-scale structures in a young universe (Hartnett 2015).

Likewise, *if* one assumes that the "waters above" are spinning, then it seems that the shell would tend to fly apart due to "centrifugal force" (note to my fellow physicists: centrifugal force is in quotes!). Likewise, wouldn't the shell tend to flatten along the direction of the rotation axis?

These are issues that I don't necessarily know how to resolve from a physics perspective, but I am trying to derive as much information as possible from the biblical text, even though that information may sometimes raise additional questions.

In the following sections, I discuss some miscellaneous ideas that also could be relevant to constructing a biblical cosmology.

Other Possibilities: Is the Heavenly Mount Zion Located in a Northerly Direction?

A couple of Old Testament passages seem to suggest that the abode of God is associated with the direction north. Isaiah 14:12–3 describes Satan's boasting:

> How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: *I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north*: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (emphasis mine)

Taken at face value, this passage seems to be saying that there is a heavenly mountain that serves as a place of meeting (or congregation) for the heavenly beings and that this heavenly mountain is in a northerly direction.

Another passage of Scripture seems to confirm this idea. Psalm 75:6–7 says this:

> For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

This is *very* interesting. The direction north is conspicuously absent by its omission in verse 6. If promotion does come from a direction, it must come from the direction north, as this is the only cardinal direction not excluded from the list. But the next verse makes it clear that it is God who puts down or sets up. Is this suggesting that the abode of God is in a northerly direction? It may also be significant that in Ezekiel's vision, Ezekiel saw his vision of God in a whirlwind coming from the north (Ezekiel 1:4).

Likewise, the whirlwind from which God spoke to Job may have come from a northerly direction as well:

> Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. (Job 37:22)

The word *zahab* translated "fair weather" is usually translated "gold" and is rendered "golden splendor" in most other translations. This verse seems to be saying that a golden splendor associated with God was coming from the north – which makes sense, since God begins speaking to Job in the very next chapter (Job 38:1).

But if the abode of God is associated with the direction north, this raises other questions: Does the direction north refer to the geographical north pole, or the magnetic north pole, since the two were "misaligned" by about 11° of latitude in 1995 (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 150)? This misalignment has decreased somewhat in more recent years but is still significant.

The first option seems more likely for several reasons. First, the location of the north geomagnetic pole has changed dramatically over the last several hundred years. Furthermore, although other cultures (such as the Greeks) may have possessed knowledge of magnetism by the time of Isaiah (Fowler, 1997), it is not clear that the Hebrews had such knowledge.

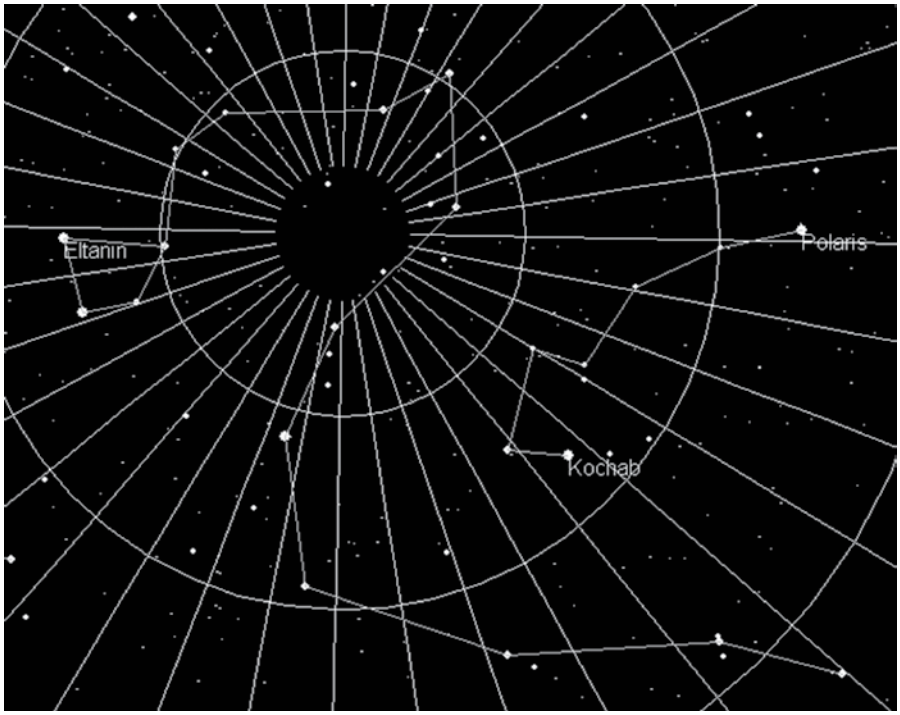

Figure 4. The constellation Draco encircles the North Pole of the Ecliptic. Image Credit: Tomruen, archived at Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

This would mean that the "sides of the north" mentioned by Isaiah refers to geographical north, i.e., the direction along the earth's rotation axis. In other words, the "sides of the north" would presumably correspond to the north celestial pole. However, there is a complication. Torques applied to Earth's equator by tidal forces of the moon and the sun (and the other planets, especially Jupiter) cause the north celestial pole to precess slowly with a period of about 26,000 years (Cronin, 2010, p. 115) around the north pole of the ecliptic, which lies in a direction perpendicular to the plane of the earth's path around the sun. One could then perhaps argue that the direction north refers to the north pole of the ecliptic rather than the north celestial pole *per se*.

In either case, the heavenly mount of congregation would be in a generally northerly direction. This possibility is intriguing because, if true, it might provide additional evidence *against* the idea of a "gospel in the stars." Although the notion that the constellations depict a kind of primeval gospel message (similar to the prophecy in Genesis 3:15) in pictorial form has long been popularized by a number of authors (for example, Seiss, 1972), it has recently been strenuously criticized by Faulkner (2007, 2013). If it is indeed true that the heavenly mount of congregation is in a direction along either the north celestial pole or the north pole of the ecliptic, this might provide still another argument against this popular idea. The reason for this is that the constellation Draco (a dragon, or more specifically, a serpent), encircles the north pole of the ecliptic, which is (presumably) the location of this heavenly mountain (Figure 4). This would

seem very strange if the constellations were divinely ordained to describe the primeval gospel in pictorial form, as is often claimed. In that case, why would Draco, possibly representative of Satan, be encircling the (presumed) location of God's throne? Such a notion seems very inconsistent with the notion of a gospel in the stars, but it is very much consistent with Satan's prideful boast in Isaiah 14. Hence, if Isaiah 14:13 really is indicating that the heavenly Mount Zion is in a northerly direction, this might be evidence *against* a heavenly origin for the constellation names. It might even be positive evidence for a satanic origin for those names. However, it should also be noted that the constellations Hercules (in ancient times known as "the Kneeler") and Draco do indeed seem to depict the "crushing" of the serpent's head by the Messiah (Faulkner, 2013, p. 61), so perhaps there is some historical justification for the idea that ancient peoples used at least these two constellations to remind them of God's primeval promise of a coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15). Even if that is the case, the odd location of the constellation Draco might be an argument that the constellation names were not divinely inspired.

Another intriguing passage that seems to suggest that the direction north is somehow spiritually significant is Psalm 48:1–2:

> Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Given that Jerusalem today is definitely *not* "the joy of the whole earth," the context of this psalm seems to be prophetic, describing the state of Mount Zion and Jerusalem after the Lord's return. (In this discussion, I am writing from a "premillennial" viewpoint that assumes a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on Earth.) Interestingly, the passage seems to be saying that Mount Zion is "on the sides of the north." Taken literally, it would suggest that future Mount Zion will be located at the North Pole! Could this be a clue that during the geological upheaval of the end times, God will reorient the earth's rotational axis so that it passes through Jerusalem? We already know that the earth's topography will be significantly altered in the end times so that Mount Zion becomes the highest of all mountains (Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 40:2; Micah 4:1). Such a reorientation of the earth's rotational axis would imply that Jerusalem would be preeminent among the cities of the world in more ways than one.

Of course, this would seem to demand a much more temperate high-latitude climate than what we experience today. Yet biblical creation scholars have long speculated that something like this would indeed be the case (Morris, 1983, p. 409).

Of course, the above passage refers to the earthly Jerusalem, not the heavenly New Jerusalem. That is indeed true, but it would seem appropriate for both the earthly and heavenly Mount Zions to be aligned along the same rotational axis.

In fact, such a possibility might help to resolve a potentially puzzling feature of the New Jerusalem. However, some background is needed to "set up" the apparent problem. According to Scripture, the New Jerusalem is 12,000 furlongs (Greek *stadia*) on a side, as well as 12,000 furlongs high (Revelation 21:16). This would make the New Jerusalem about 1380 miles on a side, roughly half the length of the continental United States. Most commentators assume that the New Jerusalem will be cubical, rather than pyramidal in shape, since pyramidal structures are often associated with paganism. Also, a cubical shape would be consistent with the cubical shape of the holy of holies in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:20; 2 Chronicles 3:8). The following discussion assumes that the New Jerusalem is indeed cubical in shape, although the actual shape of the New Jerusalem is not critical in this discussion.

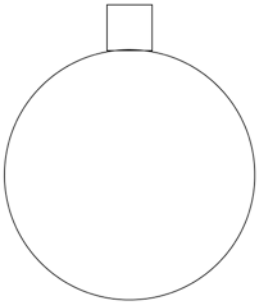

Figure 5a. Approximate size of (a presumably cubical) New Jerusalem relative to the size of the present-day Earth.

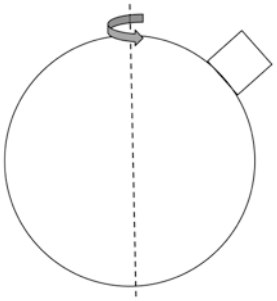

Figure 5b. The New Jerusalem, located off the Earth's rotational axis.

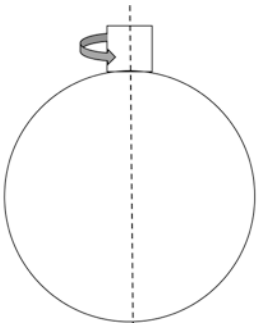

Figure 5c. The New Jerusalem, located on the Earth's rotational axis.

We do not know if the new earth will be the same size as the present Earth, but assuming that it is, the new

earth would have a radius of 3,959 miles. Hence, the height of the New Jerusalem would be 34.9% that of the earth's radius. Figure 5a shows the size of the New Jerusalem compared to that of the earth itself.

Although the New Jerusalem will not need the light of the sun or moon (Revelation 21:23), it may be that the new earth will still experience day and night due to rotation about an axis. We do know that months will still be measured in the eternal order, since the Tree of Life will yield fruit each month (Revelation 22:2). In fact, given that the tree has twelve "manner" of fruits and the fruit is yielded each month, it seems to suggest that there will be twelve months per year, even on the new earth. And if that is the case, there would likely be night and day.

And that is the root of the puzzling feature regarding the New Jerusalem. If the New Jerusalem were to be located "off" the (presumed) rotational axis of the new earth, then this would be very asymmetrical (Figure 5b). At a minimum, this would seem somewhat aesthetically displeasing and might even constitute a rotationally unstable situation, depending on the mass of the New Jerusalem. But if it were located on the new earth's rotational axis, then this would seem much more symmetrical and presumably more aesthetically pleasing (Figure 5c). But if this is to be the case for the New Jerusalem on the new earth, then it seems reasonable that it would also be the case for Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom. Hence, Jerusalem would be located at the North Pole during the millennium, which seems to be what Psalm 48:1–2 is saying.

The Tabernacle and the Temples: Hidden Cosmological Clues?

The Bible gives extremely detailed descriptions of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:1–31:11; 36:1–40:33), Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:1–8:9; 2 Chronicles 2:1–4:22), and even Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel 40:1–47:12). It is remarkable that the Bible spends much more time discussing these places of worship than even the Creation Week, the fall of man, or the Genesis Flood. Surely there is a reason for that!

Is it possible that these descriptions might also yield some important clues to constructing an accurate cosmology? Secular scientists would no doubt sneer at the notion of attempting to derive cosmological information from these passages of Scripture, but the Bible-believing cosmologist or astrophysicist cannot afford to overlook the possibility that the Lord may really have given us some such "hints" in these passages.

Conclusion

This article has mainly been an exercise in "thinking out loud" in hope of stimulating discussion on this issue. These are the kinds of questions and issues with which creation scientists must grapple if we are going to construct a truly biblical cosmology.

Acknowledgments

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