

The Good Word

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PART I: BIBLICAL CREATION

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Psalm 18:1-3 (LXX) The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. 2 Day unto day poureth forth speech, and night unto night proclaimeth knowledge. 3 There are no tongues nor words in which their voices are not heard.



CREATION OF THE SUN, MOON, AND THE STARS, MOSAIC ICON, MONREALE CATHEDRAL, PALERMO, ITALY, C. AD 1180.

THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONY OF CREATION

Anyone who casts their eyes toward the night sky on a clear night cannot help but be awestruck by the majesty of the heavens: the Milky Way, the constellations, the myriad of stars all putting on a light show of wonders. Where did it come from? How was it created? What is its future? These are all questions that we all have asked ourselves at one time or another. And all these questions have been answered by our Triune-God in the *Holy Scriptures* of the **Bible**, the revelation of God to man. In the ancient world every


culture had its creation myths, its philosophical prejudices, and so it is today in our modern materialistic, atheistic, “scientific” world. However, only the Chosen People, the ancient Israelites and the New Testament Church, received the truth of the creation from the source, God Himself.

In our modern world the scientific study of the heavens with ever advancing technology has led to an explosion of both new information and ideas through the Hubble Space Telescope, deep space probes, spectroscopy, Einstein’s special and general relativity, quantum mechanics, subatomic particle physics, string- and super-string-theory, supergravity, field particle cosmology, quantum field theory, baryon acoustic oscillations, cosmic chronometers, and ultrafast super-computers. But rather than theorizing and interpreting all this information in a fashion that honors the Creator and the uniqueness of man and his home world, the earth, most cosmologists, physicists, chemists, and educators have chosen to go in the direction of their own human wisdom, imaginations, and philosophies, as did the ancients, worshipping creation and not the Creator. Yet, all these new findings in astronomy and the new physics, if viewed from an Orthodox Christian, God-worshipping viewpoint, only enhance our wonder of the Universe and awe of our Creator. That is the view we will be seeking in this series. For those well versed in much higher mathematics, physics, astronomy and/or astrophysics, I pray that this will stimulate you to swim upstream against the strong current of modern atheistic cosmology and add your voices to the choruses of the Heavenly Hosts on high in praise of our Creator.

The sublime contents and arguments of St. Basil the Great’s *Hexameron*, as well as those of other Patristic writers quoted and referenced in Fr. Seraphim Rose’s *Genesis, Creation, and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision*¹ provide a solid foundation for an Orthodox understanding of creation and cosmology.

Here, in Part I, we will look specifically at the witness of our Creator in the *Holy Scriptures* -- looking at various aspects of the language used by the biblical authors as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and how that deepens our understanding and admiration of their God-given revelations. In Part II, we will briefly

1. Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation, and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision*, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, 2011, especially pp. 109-194 and 433-450.



review models and theories of cosmology in ancient, medieval, and modern times pointing out philosophical biases that underly their observations and thinking. In Part III we focus on contemporary cosmology including the big bang theory and its current *inflationary* modifications as well as selected alternative creationist models.

First of all, we should understand what is meant by the word *cosmos*? The word comes from the Greek *κόσμος* meaning *order*. In the context of creation it is an inclusive term for the Universe which, since antiquity, has been regarded as an orderly, harmonious system. Both ancient and modern man appreciated the harmony and order of sun, the moon, and the night sky --a design of unparalleled beauty.

In reviewing what the *Holy Scriptures* actually testify about the creation and structure of the Universe (the heart of cosmology), I will be using the King James Version (**KJV**) as the basic English biblical text. It is a reasonably accurate English translation of the Hebrew Masoretic Text (**MT**) whose oldest extant full copies date only from the 10th-11th centuries AD.² But, for the passages which we will be studying, the **MT** matches quite closely to the extant manuscripts of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*,³ which date from as early as the 4th century BC and as late as the 2nd century AD⁴. I will also be using the Brenton English translation of the **LXX** which, in most cases, closely parallels the **KJV**. However, the connotations of the Hebrew wording are what I find both interesting and important for *Biblical Cosmology*, so we will be focusing on that.

GENESIS 1: ON THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS

Genesis 1:1 KJV, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 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*

2. **Aleppo Codex** The consonantal Hebrew text of this codex dates from c. AD 925–935. It was written by Shelomoh ben Buya'a, and the vocalization, accentuation, and Masorah were added by the famous Masorete Aharon ben Asher. The codex is probably the oldest extant manuscript that originally contained the complete Old Testament. Unfortunately, the beginning and the end of the codex, including the whole book of Exodus, were lost in or after 1947. The **Leningrad Codex** dates from AD 1008 or 1009. Shemu'el ben Ya'akov wrote the consonantal text and also provided it with its vocalization, accentuation, and Masorah. This codex is now the oldest fully intact manuscript comprising the complete **Tanakh** (Jewish Bible). Source: Sanders P, *The Ashker-Bilson Manuscript Remnant of the Proto-Masoretic Model Scroll of the Torah*, **Journal of Hebrew Scriptures**, (2014) 14:10-12, at <https://docplayer.net/1216719-The-ashkar-gilson-manuscript-remnant-of-a-proto-masoretic-model-scroll-of-the-torah.html>

3. **Dead Sea Scrolls Bible Translations** @ http://dssenglishbible.com/chapterview.htm#_ftnref1. [listed by book, chapter, and scroll].

4. Bonani G, Ivy S, et. al., *Radiocarbon Dating of Fourteen Dead Sea Scrolls*, **Radiocarbon**, (1992) 4(3):843-849, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277186077_Radiocarbon_Dating_of_Fourteen_Dead_Sea_Scrolls

*waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. 6 And God said, Let there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the **firmament**, and divided the waters which were under the **firmament** from the waters which were above the **firmament**: and it was so. 8 And God called the **firmament** **Heaven**. And the evening and the morning were the second day. 9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land **Earth**; and the gathering together of the waters called he **Seas**: and God saw that it was good. 11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth: and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. 13 And the evening and the morning were the third day. 14 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**: 15 And let them be for lights in the **firmament** of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 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. 17 And God set them in the **firmament** of the heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 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. 19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. 20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open **firmament** of heaven ... 31 And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Now, let's look at the Hebrew language and syntax of the text a little bit more closely:

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God created ...* The Hebrew word for God here is **אֱלֹהִים** = *Elohim*, the masculine plural of the word **אֱלֹהַּ** *Eloah*, whose root meaning is *fear*, or of **אֵל** *El*, *God*, *god*, *mighty one*, *strength*. They are both Hebrew terms for *god*, *God*, i.e., an *object of worship*, which can refer to the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or to a pagan god or gods. The most likely origin is that *elohim* comes from *eloah* as a unique development of the Hebrew Scriptures, and represents the initial revelation of the plurality of persons in the the godhead, i.e., a revelation of the Holy Trinity.⁵ This view is immediately reinforced directly in the text itself by the Hebrew verb form used here, *בָּרָא bara*, a masculine 3rd person singular verb in the *Kal*⁶ perfect tense (completed action). Thus, we have a plural subject *God(s)*, i.e., and a masculine singular verb (*He*) created. The Rabbis rationalize that this plurality of God indicates the sum total of God's attributes and powers united in Him in complete unity.⁷ However, for Orthodox Christians, together with the *Spirit of God* *רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים ruach elohim* (formally introduced in verse 2), the first sentences of *Genesis* reveals to us the Godhead, the Holy Trinity, i.e., the One God in Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all working together as One in the creation of the Universe. The *Kal* form of *bara* always means to create and is only used for divine creation.⁸ It is used 45 times in the *MT* and only of God or by God.⁹ Moreover, the word *בָּרָא bara*, to create, historically has always had the connotation of producing something out of nothing, so-called *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁰ Indeed, 2 *Maccabees* 7:28 (*Lxx*) explicitly states so: *I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not*.¹¹ Thus, the Universe had a definite beginning. It was created out of nothing by the Triune God Who bears witness to His acts of creation in His revelation to Moses here in *Genesis* 1.

2 *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep ...* Here the Hebrew is again interesting: *וְהָיָה תוֹהוּ וְבוֹהוּ tohu v'bohu* means *astonishingly empty/desolate and void/empty; chaotic and confused*. The only other place in Scripture where the phrase is used is in *Jeremiah* 4:23, *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light*. This was part of a prophetic vision given by the Lord to Jeremiah concerning the upcoming utter destruction of Judea and

5. Harris RL, Archer GL, Watke BK, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL, 1980, p. 41.

6. *Kal* is the most common and basic of all the forms of a Hebrew verb. It denotes simple action or state of being.

7. Rabbi M. Zlotowitz, Rabbi Nossou Scherman, *Bereishis/Genesis, Vol. I(a)*, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY, 1989, p. 33.

8. Keil CF, Delitzsch F, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, Vol. I, The Pentateuchi*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 47.

9. Young R, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1970, p. 210.

10. Zlotowitz & Scherman, p. 31.


11. 2 *Maccabees* is believed to have been composed in Koine Greek, most likely in Alexandria, Egypt, between 150-120 BC.

Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Centuries later the Jewish sage Ramban, also known as Nachmanides (Moses ben Nahman AD 1194-1270), interpreted *תוֹהוּ tohu* as being a very thin substance -- entirely devoid of form, but having potential. He speculated that it was the primary matter that God first created from absolute nothing. From this primary matter he believed that God formed and brought everything else into existence, clothing the forms, and putting them into their finished condition.¹² Minus God in the equation, Ramban's speculation falls right in line with modern *big-bang* theorists, as we shall see later in parts II and III.

2b *and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* Here, *עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹת al-p'nay t'hom* can mean *on the face of the deep place, the deep sea, or the abyss* -- thus, a massive collection of water, and not the extremely small, extremely dense mass proposed by the *big-bang* theorists. *מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם m'rachepet al-p'nay ha-mayim* more literally means *hovered over the face of the waters*. *מְרַחֶפֶת m'rachepet*, a verb in the *Pi'el* is used to describe the hovering and brooding of an eagle caring for its young and protecting them, as in *Deut. 32:11 As an eagle awakens its nest, hovering over its fledglings, it spreads its wings, taking them and carrying them on its pinions*. Moreover, the *Pi'el* verb form implies intensification or repetition of the action of the verb. It is important to note that the Spirit of God is outside of the creation, intensely hovering with "motherly" care and purpose over the waters.

6 *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.* The Hebrew word for firmament here is *רַקִּיעַ raqiya* which means *expanse, something that is stretched out, spread out, the vault/expanse of heaven, an extended surface stomped out by a foot or beaten out like a sheet of metal*. In some sense this would imply that there is some substance to the expanse, that it can be extended, stretched, or spread out. In the *Septuagint* (*Lxx*) this Hebrew word is translated into Greek by using the word *στερέωμα stereoma*, a firm, strong, or solid structure, the solid part of the sky, and, subsequently translated into Latin with the word *firmamentum* = *that which strengthens or supports*. In ancient pagan cosmology, the use of the word firmament generally referred to a vast solid dome, i.e., the vault of heaven. In Alexandria, Egypt the use of this term *stereoma* for the heavens in the *Septuagint* in the first quarter of the 3rd century BC, may well have been influenced by contemporary Alexandrian pagan Greek scientific thought. However, St. Basil the Great (AD 330-379) dismissed the "solid vault" connotation

12. Zlotowitz & Scherman, p. 36



for *stereoma* in his treatise the *Hexameron*, the *Six Days* of Creation:

“It [the *stereoma*] is not in reality a firm and solid substance which has weight and resistance ... but as the substance of superincumbent bodies is light, without consistency and cannot be grasped by any one of our senses, it is in comparison with these pure and imperceptible substances that the firmament [*stereoma*] has received its nature.”¹³

“Upon the essence of the heavens we are contented with what Isaiah says, for, in simple language, he gives us sufficient idea of their nature: *The heaven was made like smoke*’ (Isaiah 51:6 LXX), that is to say, He created a subtle substance without solidity or density from which to form the heavens.”¹⁴

Most modern Bible translations are now using *expanse* rather than *firmament* to translate the Hebrew *raqiya*. All *Septuagint* translations in English continue to use *firmament*. A recent Catholic version, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, interestingly uses *vault*. I will be using *expanse* in the following discussions.

7 And God made the [*expanse*], and divided the waters which were under the [*expanse*] from the waters which were above the [*expanse*]: and it was so. 8 And God called the [*expanse*] Heaven. Here in verse 7 we see that the verb is translated *made* rather than *created*. Accordingly a different Hebrew word underlies this verb. It is *ya-as*, meaning *made, created, made a thing into something*. The word *ya-as* is derived from the verb *ya-as* which, according to Ramban, “always means putting an object into its ultimate condition, i.e., God ‘completed’ the expansion.”¹⁵ In verse 8, where the *KJV* reads “Heaven”, the *MT* Hebrew reads *shamayim*, a plural, i.e., *heavens*. It is always in the plural form in Hebrew. So, following Ramban, the language implies that the *expanse* was expanded into its final condition here on Day 2, and was then referred to as the *heavens*. Note, the heavens were not pronounced good at this time, but only after the sun, moon, and stars were added on Day 4. So, if there were a rapid expansion of the heavens, as most modern cosmologists believe, and, were we to follow Ramban’s etymology, that expansion would have been completed on Day 2.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: and the stars also. The same verb *ya-as*, *yas* (*made/created, put into its final form*), is used here. So God made the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day, not earlier. Moreover, He must have made them into their mature forms *so as to shine upon the earth* that day.

13. St. Basil the Great, *Homily III.7 (Hexameron)*, in Shaff P and Wace H, *NPNF 2nd Series, Vol 8*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Peabody, MA, 1994, p. 69.

14. *Ibid.*, *Homily I.8*, p. 56. The *MT (KJV)* reads: *for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke*.

15. Zlotowitz & Scherman, quoting Ramban, p. 46.

17 And God set them in the [*expanse*] of the heaven to give light upon the earth. Heaven is again plural in the Hebrew *brakiya ha-shamayim* = *in the expanse (of) the heavens (ha-shamayim)*. Having made the sun, moon, and the stars, God now placed them within the *expanse* of the heavens -- all on the fourth day. Moreover, He saw that it was good, indicating that the starlight, daylight, and moonlight appeared on earth on Day 4 fulfilling completely the purpose He intended for them!

The birds were created on the 5th day. They are said to fly in the open firmament, the open *expanse* of the heavens: *and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven*. However, it is most interesting that the Hebrew here reads a little differently: *and living birds let fly upon/about the earth upon/about the face of the expanse of the heavens*. Here the face of the *expanse* of the heavens is what the birds fly in, i.e., that part of the *expanse* that faces us on the earth, that which is closest to earth, our lower atmosphere. But there is much more to the *expanse of the heavens* since it also contains the sun, moon, and the stars set within it. Remember, at this time in creation, the waters above the heavens are now out beyond the sun, moon, and stars!

In summary, the LORD bore witness to Moses of His creation of the heavens and the earth out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo* by the Holy Trinity). The creation thus had a beginning wherein it was dark, deep, bounded, and said to be water. The Spirit of God intensively hovered over the waters -- so this creation is not part of God, but external to Him. Besides the waters, God also created light on this day. Evening and morning defined this, the First Day. On Day 2 God divided the waters, possibly making the *expanse* in its final form and size between the waters below and the waters above. This *expanse* He called the *heavens*, in which the birds would later fly and in which the sun, moon, and stars were later set. Note that the heavens are “bounded”, not infinite, because they are still surrounded by the waters *which were above the heavens*. How do we know if those waters are still there? The prophets Haggai and Zachariah tell us so! The *Superscription* of *Psalm 148:4 LXX* sung at every Matins/Orthros service: reads *Alleluia. Of Aggeus and Zacharias, ... 4 Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and thou water that art above the heavens*. So do the three Holy Children in Babylon in their song in *Daniel 3:59 (LXX)* sung on Holy Saturday: *Bless the Lord, all ye waters above the heavens, and all ye powers of the Lord*. We also read in the 1st troparion, 7th ode, of Matins for Theophany, *The angelic powers stood with trembling and wonder at the Jordan as if in Heaven, looking upon such great condescension of God: how*

He that holdeth secure the waters that stand above the firmament, stood in the waters clothed in a body, He the God of our Fathers.

On Day 3 God gathered the waters under the expanse and caused the dry land to appear -- the earth was born! It appears central with its land and seas. Plants were also created on this day, and all were pronounced *good*. [Note: there is no sun or sunlight yet!] On Day 4 the LORD created the sun, the moon, and the stars, and only then placed them in the expanse of the heavens, in such a way that they gave light on the earth that day and marked days, seasons, years, and would also be for signs. Then He saw that the heavens with the sun, moon, and the stars were good.

As to how they were all made, *Genesis* records, ‘*God said*’, ‘*God made*’, and ‘*God placed*’; whereas *Psalms* 148:5 *LXX* reads 5b ... for He spake and they came to be; 5c He commanded, and they were created [Note: phrase 5c is omitted in the *MT*.]; and lastly, in the First Kathisma of the Psalter we read in *Psalms* 8:3, *LXX*, *For I will behold the heavens, the works of Thy fingers, the moon, and the stars, which Thou hast founded*.

As to why they were made -- the Prophet *Isaiah* writes *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; ... He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:11)*. St. John the Apostle writes, *Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:11b)*.

PROPHETS & WRITINGS ON THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS

Leaving *Genesis* let us press on to *Job*, the *Psalms*, and the Prophets *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Zechariah*. In these books one of the more interesting and startling aspects of creation is revealed: the *stretching/spreading out of the heavens*, of the *raqiya* (the expanse of the heavens) by our Creator. Why is this important? Because, as the *stretching/spreading out of the heavens like a curtain, tent, or veil*, takes a prominent role as a description of how God fashioned the heavens in the *Prophets*, the *Histories*, and the *Psalms*. Today, some 25-40 centuries later, in modern scientific cosmology, the *stretching out of the heavens*, of the fabric of space, has taken center stage -- replacing the big bang theory with the so-called *inflationary models* of creation with a 10³⁰-fold rapid expansion of extremely dense matter only 10⁻²⁴ meters in diameter, in less than 10⁻³⁴ seconds, beginning 10⁻³⁵ seconds after the “primordial creation.” Some creationist models have also focused on an extremely rapid and immense *stretching* of the heavens.

Let’s begin by examining what amazing things the LORD revealed to that sage of the *Old Testament*, the

holy, righteous, and much suffering Job:

Job 9:7-10 [Who]¹⁶ commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. 8 [Who] alone **spreadest** out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. 9 [Who] maketh Arcturus [Heb. *שׁוֹשׁ* Osh = bear (*Ursus major?*)], Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. 10 [Who] doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. The key word here in verse 8 is **spreadest**, in Hebrew, *נִפְּטָה* no-teh, an active singular masculine participle, meaning [He, the One, Who, Which] is spreading out, [i.e., the participle here expresses present action and can also indicate continuing action], commonly used in *Scripture* for the spreading out of a tent or of a curtain, both of which are relatively inelastic, unlike the phenomenal elasticity of the Universe usually portrayed as the surface of an expanding balloon in modern *big-bang* and *inflationary* cosmological theories. Note also, that the work of God in the creation of the heavens, the stars, and the constellations (*Ursus*, *Orion*, and *Pleiades*, and the chambers of the south) is described by Him as *past finding out*, i.e., is unsearchable, and is replete with *wonders without number*, i.e., uncountable, innumerable. Hence, any naturalistic scientific inquiry into the origins or the physics of the creation of the heavenly bodies or the *spreading out* of the heavens would appear to be fruitless and merely naïve human speculation.

Job 26:7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty space [יְהוָה *tohu*, as in *Gen 1:2* above], and hangeth the earth upon nothing. *LXX* He stretches out the north wind upon nothing and He upon nothing hangs the earth. What an amazing statement, that the LORD suspends the earth (upon) *nothing/nothingness* *לִי־מַח* (-*ג*) *li-mah* -- a word found only in *Job*!

Job 37:18. Hast thou with Him **spread out** the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass? [Interestingly, the *LXX* records a significant difference: Wilt thou establish with him foundations for the ancient heavens? They are as strong as a molten mirror.]. Here, *Hast thou ... spread out*, *שִׁפְּרָה*, is a 2nd person singular masculine, Hiphil (causative) verb form, of the root verb *שִׁפַּר* = whose basic meaning is *to stamp with the feet, to stretch/spread out*. The Hiphil form means (to cause) to *stretch out*, (to cause) to *expand*. As seen earlier the noun *שִׁפְּרָה* *raqiya*, expanse/firmament is also derived from this same root. This verb is similarly used in *Numbers 16:39 KJV (17:4 MT)* when the 250 followers of *Koreh*, who usurped the role of the priests and burnt incense before the Lord were killed by fire

16. “Which” in the *KJV* is better translated here as “Who”, as in the *LXX*. Otherwise, the *LXX* follows the *MT (KJV)* quite closely.

from the LORD. Their copper censers were collected and beaten into plates for the altar: *Numbers 17:4 (MT Chabad Translation) So Eleazar the kohen [priest] took the copper censers which the fire victims had brought, and they hammered them out* [הִרְקִיעוּם; an active piel verb form of רָקַע reflecting intensive/repetitive action] as an overlay for the altar.

Psalms 104:2 *Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain* The key Hebrew word here נֹטֶה is the same as in **Job 8:9** above נוֹטֶה, no-teh [albeit with a different form for the vowel] -- a singular active masculine participle meaning (He) Who is stretching out, or, the One Who is stretching out. The **Septuagint** Greek is quite the same: **103:2 LXX** ἑκτείνων τὸν οὐρανὸν ὡσεὶ δέροιν. **103:2 LXX (HTM)** *Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain.* The Greek word ἑκτείνων in this verse is also a present active masculine singular participle, i.e., (He) Who is stretching out. The Hebrew word in this verse for curtain is רִיטֵה; y^s-ri-yah which is used mostly for the looped-curtains making up the tent of the Tabernacle. As a curtain has substance which can be stretched out along the curtain rod, does that suggest here that the heavens also have “substance” that can be stretched out as well? Although 19th and 20th century scientific cosmology discounted the Maxwellian aether as a medium for the transmission of light throughout the Universe, contemporary cosmology believes that space is not empty, but contains a non-palpable invisible field, the *Higgs field*¹⁷, for which there now appears to be some scientific evidence.

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.* The **LXX** reads: *It is He that comprehendeth the circle of the earth ... He that set up the heaven as a chamber, and stretched it out as a tent to dwell in.* Here, the Hebrew for the circle is חֹךְ chug, whose underlying verb means to draw a circle around. The **Septuagint** differs a little in the next section of this verse wherein it has *set up the heaven as a chamber* in contrast to the **MT** that *stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain.* However, the **Masoretic Text** gives us another insight when translated literally: *It is He that is stretching out as a thin veil the heavens, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.* Thus, this *thin veil* could possibly also lend a little support to the current belief in the real presence of something imperceptible (alluded to by St.

Basil earlier) lying between the solid, liquid, and gaseous matter in the Universe, i.e., an invisible field.

Isaiah 42:5 *Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out.* Literally, הַיְהוָה בֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטֵהָם | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Thus says God [the El], JHWH (the one) creating the heavens and stretching them out. Again, the Hebrew has a Kal active, masculine singular participle for creating אֲרָבַן, as well as for and stretching them out וְנוֹטֵהָם. The **LXX** reads, *Thus saith the LORD God, who made the heavens, and established it.*

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* [נוֹטֵהָם is stretching out] *the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; The LXX reads: I am the Lord the Maker of all things; I alone stretched out the heavens and firmly established the earth.*

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.* Here, the Hebrew literally reads, אֲנִי יְדִי וְטַיִם שְׁמַיִם: (By) my two hands [a dual noun] are (the) heavens (being?) stretched out. Here טַיִם is a Kal masculine singular passive participle. The **LXX** reads, *I have made the earth, and man upon it: I with my hand have established the heaven; I have given commandment to all the stars.* Thus, we have now seen that the **LXX** (Brenton translation) frequently and uses the word *establish(ed)* for the **MT KJV's** *stretch(-eth)(-ed)* or *spread(-eth) out*.

Isaiah 51:13a *And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; The LXX concurs.*

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. The LXX concurs.*

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. The Septuagint places this chapter as chapter 28. It concurs very closely with the MT: Jeremiah 28:15 (LXX) The Lord made the earth by his power, preparing the world by his wisdom, by his understanding he stretched out the heaven.*

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.*

[Note: Nowhere is it mentioned that the sun, moon, stars or constellations have been spread out in the heavens -- only the heavens have been stretched out.]

17. Greene B, *How the Higgs Boson Was Found*, **Smithsonian Magazine**, July 2013, online at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-the-higgs-boson-was-found-4723520/>

Psalms 147:4 He telleth [הַגִּיד, *mo-neh*, can also mean *appointeth*] the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. The **Lxx** Greek text reads **146:4** ὁ ἀριθμῶν πλήθη ἀστρῶν, καὶ πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς ὀνόματα καλῶν, i.e., *The one counting the multitudes of the stars and calleth them all by name.* The initial phrase, ὁ ἀριθμῶν, is a masculine singular present active participle, i.e., *the one who is counting.* The word πλήθη here in the accusative case is a plural noun, so it means *multitudes*, not *multitude*. This implies an even greater number of stars and galaxies, something that the Hubble Space Telescope and various deep space probes over the past 3 decades, have affirmed over and over again. With the *New Horizon* space probe now venturing out beyond the solar system, it is now recording more previously unseen clusters of distant galaxies and stars. However, as just reported in Feb 2021, the number of those galaxies and stars is 10-fold less than what was expected based on *Hubble Space Telescope* photos -- i.e., hundreds of billions of stars instead of 2 trillion.¹⁸ But that number is still theoretically countable by the LORD. Thus, this recording of the numbers of the stars by the *New Horizon* is consistent with the *Scriptures*, describing an enormous number, but not an infinite number of stars.

I Corinthians 15:41 *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth in glory from another star in glory.* Here St. Paul was comparing the glory of terrestrial and celestial bodies in comparison to fleshly and spiritual bodies, but notes that the stars differ in glory, one from another. This *glory* corresponds to the size, color, composition, and luminosity of the various stars -- one of the major fields of study in modern cosmology.

ON THE FUTURE AND FATE OF THE COSMOS

Now we shall review what *Holy Scripture* has to say about the future of the cosmos.

Isaiah 34:4 *And all the host [Lxx powers] of heaven shall be dissolved [הִפָּזְזוּ, niphil perfect passive verb = were dissolved], and the heavens shall be rolled [were rolled] together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down [kal future verb, = will fall], as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.*

Isaiah 51:6 ... for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment ...

Psalms 102:25-27 *Of old, Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy*

hands. 26 They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change [Lxx fold] them, and they shall be changed: 27 But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.

Thus we can see that the *Old Testament Scriptures* of the Hebrew **MT (KJV)** and the Greek **Lxx (Brenton)** are in good agreement that the heavens will *perish*, be *rolled up as a scroll*, be *dissolved* or *melt*. In other words, just as the Universe had a beginning, it shall also have an end. The **New Testament** reinforces that prophetic ending. Indeed, St. Paul in his *Letter to the Hebrews* quotes from *Psalms 102 (101 Lxx)*:

Hebrews 1:10-12 *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a cloth garment; 12 And as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

St. John the Theologian saw the heaven depart as a scroll in his **Apocalypse**:

Revelation 6:14 *And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

But, most impressively, St. Peter, in his second epistle, eloquently expounds on this inevitable dissolution of the heavens and the earth wherein they shall pass away, melting with fervent heat, dissolved by fire:

2 Peter 3:1-13 *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing*

18. <https://sputniknews.com/science/202101141081766702-new-horizons-helps-determine-how-many-many-galaxies-are-out-there-study-says/>

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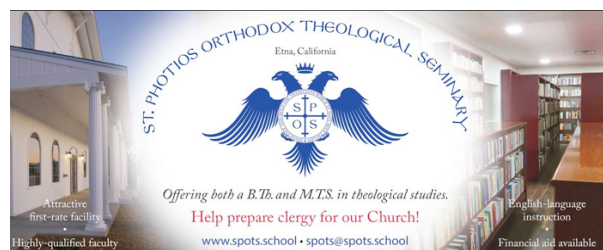
then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In summary, we can say that Biblical creation, describes a Universe that is young and finite, i.e., bounded by the water above the firmament. It had a beginning, created out of nothing. That beginning was a formless, void, and chaotic abyss of water as well as light, both created on the First Day. On Day 2 God created an *expanse* in the middle of the waters, dividing the waters above and below, calling the expanse the *heavens*. On Day 3 God formed the *earth* out of the waters and in the waters, thus creating dry land, and gathered the waters under the heaven to form the seas. He then created the plants and trees. On Day 4 He made a fully functional *greater light* (the sun), *lesser light* (the moon), and *multitudes of stars* of different *glories/luminosities*, and then *set/placed* them in the *expanse*, *suspending* the earth [and, by inference, the sun, moon, and stars] on *nothing/nothingness*, with an important purpose in mind: *to give light upon the earth, to divide the day from the night, and for signs, seasons, days, and years*, which they did -- and He saw that it was good! Thus, the earth is one day older than the sun, moon, and stars/planets. On day 5 God created fowl that fly in the *face of the expanse of Heaven*. Note: the size of the earth and the of Universe are not specifically mentioned in *Scripture*. The Hebrew active present participles for *stretching/spreading* can have the connotation of continuing action. Since these revelations of the LORD were given to several prophets

centuries after the time of Moses, for them to use the present active participle implies a ongoing *stretching/spreading* of the *expanse* to their day and potential to ours as well, a *stretching/spreading* which is not a new work of creation, but the continuation of the spreading set in motion beginning on Day 2. As such, the LORD may have anticipated in *Scripture* what is being interpreted in modern astronomy as the expansion of the Universe. That would also be consistent with the LORD'S promise to the Prophet Jeremiah which implies that the boundary of the Universe is beyond the reach of all of man's efforts to directly measure it:

Jeremiah 31:37 ... if the Heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the Earth searched out beneath, I will cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done ...

So, it is not infinite, but bounded by water, and definitely not measurable by man! Moreover, we saw that *It is He that is stretching out as a thin veil the heavens, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in*, but with no time frame given as to when that started, or what is its current status. Finally, we note that the cosmos has an end -- it is not eternal. It will collapse, fold in on itself, be consumed with fire, and be dissolved into its elements, a fate also portrayed in Alexander Friedmann's metrics of a closed Universe under Einstein's theory of General Relativity. ❖ ❖ ❖



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