



SPECIAL LESSON

“How Many Earths?”

March 24, 2024

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Introduction:

- A. In teaching this series, “A Biblical View of the End Times,” different versions of the question, “How many earths are there?” has come up a fair number of times.
- B. It first came up at the beginning of this series when we studied “the serpent” in the Garden of Eden. This, of course, was Satan.
 1. However, the ‘snake’ or ‘serpent’ term in our English translations is misleading. We did a deep dive way back then and we learned this was no ordinary snake.
 2. We learned, instead, that this creature, this serpentine-like “nahash” (Hebrew), was some sort of shining or luminous entity who was deceptive and capable of communicating and giving dark spiritual insights or divinations.
 3. Clearly, it was an evil entity since it was urging disobedience to God’s command to not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden.
 4. We learned that, while the garden and the new earth were all “good” as God had declared them to be, evil, in the form of this “nahash” was already active and pre-existent in the bigger picture.
 5. We noted the obvious ramifications: It was clear there was a prior situation that had preceded the time of Adam and Eve’s creation where something bad had happened where this singular evil had emerged.
 6. You can listen to the lesson from May 1, 2022, to get much more detail on these issues. As I said, we took a deep dive into these things at that time.
- C. At several points throughout this series, and most recently as we have studied “The New Heaven and New Earth” of **Revelation Ch. 21**, variations of the question, “How many earths?” has come up again.
 1. There are generally two schools of thought:
 - a. The first camp says there are two “heaven and earth:”
 - There is the one we live in now (This same one was decimated in The Great Flood of Noah, and it will be thoroughly refreshed during The Millennial Kingdom).
 - In both those cases, it is THIS heaven and earth (that’s an important phrase, by the way, heaven and earth) that was ‘reshaped’ (past) and will be ‘refreshed’ (future).
 - For this camp, the second heaven and earth is introduced in **Revelation 21:1** where John writes, “*Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*” We studied this section of Scripture the past two weeks.
 - b. The second camp of people believes there are a total of three “heaven and earth” situations.

- This camp agrees with the first bunch on the present heaven and earth as well as the future one in **Revelation Ch. 21**.
 - However, this group also believes that there was another heaven and earth BEFORE the 6-day Creation account in **Genesis Ch. 1**, so this camp sees the “New Heaven and New Earth” of **Revelation Ch. 21** as being the THIRD installment. They see a total of three.
 - In this class, I’ve not hidden my own views on this matter. I belong to this latter camp. Most of you already know that.
 - My view is we are presently living in the second heaven and earth and we are anticipating the third which is yet to come.
- c. All that said, over the last year and a half or so, I have probably received more questions on this matter than any other issue apart from various ‘Rapture-related’ questions, (emails, texts, face-to-face, phone calls, etc.).
 - d. As of late, as I have announced my intentions to do a special lesson on this topic, I have received a chorus of support and excitement from some of you, while others of you have proactively reached for the garlic and wooden stakes.
 - e. This issue is, unfortunately, a divisive one. It doesn’t need to be that way, and my efforts today will be to discourage those kinds of dynamics. That is my heart’s intent.
 - f. I don’t think division of this sort has any place in the proper fellowship of believers, and I think by the time this lesson is done, most of you will agree that it doesn’t need to come to that.

D. My personal background on this matter:

1. I first encountered this issue during my first semester at Moody Bible Institute back in 1981. It was then that one of my professors first mentioned it as his view.
 2. He explained it then by using the phrase “the gap theory.” (More on this phrase in a moment). It was his view that the earth was much older than many folks imagined it to be.
 3. I recall recoiling in visceral disbelief and horror when I first heard this.
 - a. It seemed to fly in the face of all I’d been taught growing up in the church.
 - b. It appeared to take issue with the literal six-day Creation account of **Genesis Ch. 1**
 - c. It felt so totally heretical, like my professor was somehow trying to give latitude and credibility to some of the points of evolution.
 - d. I recall being in a ‘spiritual funk’ over this issue for quite some time thereafter.
 - e. Perhaps some of you can relate right now to how I felt then.
- E. In the years since, as I have studied this issue more and more, I have changed my views.
1. Today, I recognize that there are very notable scholars and ‘greats of the faith’ who see a total of three heaven and earth scenarios in Scripture.
 2. There are also notable scholars and ‘greats of the faith’ who believe in two.

3. This reinforces that we can have different views on certain things, but still have unity where it most counts.
- F. This is an appropriate moment to remind ourselves of several important and overarching truths:
1. First, this is not 'a theological hill to die on.' In no way should we elevate this matter to something like the sanctity of the message of the Gospel.
 2. Second, we also need to remind ourselves that those passages of the Bible that pertain to this matter also abide by the terms of **2 Timothy 3:16-17** which reads as follows:

“Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, having been fully equipped toward every good work.”

3. The bottom line is even those Scriptures, and those issues which we are sometimes tempted to place in a lower category of importance are still divinely inspired to be in God’s Word for our personal benefit.
4. And third, we are instructed to properly study the Bible, and I have three things I want to say on this matter:
 - a. The first thing is we are instructed to properly unpack and study the Scriptures. **2 Timothy 2:15** says, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*
 - This is not a suggestion, or something optional. It is essentially a command.
 - It also implies that there is an improper way to study God’s Word, and we see that sad fact in many churches today.
 - We are told to *“rightly divide the word of truth,”* and we must recognize there is an intentional discipline and a high standard to doing that.
 - b. The second thing I want to say about properly unpacking and studying the Scriptures is we need to take personal responsibility to do this.
 - It’s not your pastor’s or your teacher’s job; it’s YOUR job!
 - The Bereans were commended for being *“more noble”* in **Acts 17:11** because they rigorously evaluated the teachings of Paul and Silas. It’s an issue of character and maturity.
 - The Bereans went back to the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul and Silas were teaching them was true. We all need to be as they were.
 - c. The third thing I want to say about properly unpacking the Scriptures is we need to use **responsible** methods of interpretation. This is something I have drilled into this class from the very beginning.
 - d. Starting from the outset of this series, I have emphasized over and over the three rules of proper Biblical interpretation.

- e. Number one, passages must be understood in light of their original Biblical meaning.
 - This means we need to understand what the original language a passage was written in was trying to say.
 - The Bible was written in 3 languages: Hebrew (most of the OT), Aramaic (parts of Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremiah) and Greek (the NT). There are times we need to know the nuances and intentions of those languages (Note: There are plenty of study tools available for us to use).
- f. Number two, passages must be in harmony with other passages on the same subject.
 - The Bible doesn't disagree with itself, and that's a sign of its divine authorship.
 - We need to arrive at those conclusions which the Bible arrives at when all the passages on a topic are taken into account.
- g. Number three, a passage's meaning must be in compliance with the development of the context.
 - Taking passages out of context, out of their proper immediate application, and forcing them to say something they are not really saying is one of the greatest invitations to heresy. It's a routine pattern of the cults.

NOTE: These three rules of proper Biblical interpretation are like a three-legged stool. If one leg is compromised or missing, that stool is unstable and cannot be trusted. **IMPORTANT:** I don't believe there is ANY proper interpretation on ANY Biblical issue that has violated one or more of these three rules.

NOTE: With all that said, let's dive right into the meat of this lesson. We're going to use these three rules of proper Biblical interpretation.

*****Starting with the operative text: (Cf. Gen. 1:1-2; ESV)*****

I. Now, let me read it the way the Hebrew language renders it to be understood:

(vs. 1): "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **(vs. 2):** *BUT*, the earth *HAD BECOME* formless and *VOID*, and *JUDGEMENT OF DARKNESS* was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

- A. There are some key Hebrew words used in **Genesis 1:2** that explain this situation better than our English translations do. Quick linguistics lesson; lots of scholarly input at this junction, but best summary for this class's purposes is from Chuck Missler:
- B. **"tohu vabohu"** – Comes from two Hebrew words: **"tohu"** and **"bohu."** (Put together, **"tohu vabohu,"** meaning: "in vain, without form, confused, chaotic, void, empty, a waste")
- C. (Regarding the word 'was;' Hebrew: **"hayah"**) – a transitive verb showing an action or process; it is also used in **Genesis 19:26** where it says, "Lot's wife *BECAME* ("hayah") a

pillar of salt” – she went from one state to another different state through an interventive process)

- D. Then, “**vav**,” at the start of **vs. 2**. It is a Hebrew term that is an “adversative conjunction,” meaning, not ‘and’, rather, ‘but.’ (NOTE: Both the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate translate this properly: “But.”). This “adversative conjunction” often suggests, by the way, a significant time delay.
 - E. Lastly, there is “**hosek**” (This is the English term rendered as ‘darkness’). It’s a term for unnatural darkness. This is not the darkness that occurs in the simple absence of light, but rather it’s an abnormal darkness, one of supernatural design. This Hebrew term is also used in **Exodus 10:21** where God introduces a judgement of darkness in Egypt, a darkness “...that can be felt.”)
- II. So, what do we derive from this little linguistics exercise? (Here are a few high-altitude takeaways):
- A. First, we’re using Rule #1 of proper Biblical interpretation. We’re studying a passage in light of its original Biblical meaning.
 - B. When we study the Hebrew intentions and nuances of this part of Scripture, we see something happened between **Genesis 1:1** and **Genesis 1:2**. That’s the natural conclusion if you stick with a literal translation.
 - C. The earth went from one state to another state. It BECAME formless and void, meaning, it was not that way before. “*Tohu*” and “*bohu*” are nearly always used together to indicate an aftermath of judgment.
 - D. So, here we have a very strong suggestion that a bad situation happened, and God judged it. He intervened AFTER something had happened, after something had gone wrong.
 - E. As a result, the heavens and earth were disrupted. The earth BECAME formless, chaotic, and void. A thick supernatural, even palpable, darkness was present over all of the scene.
 - F. It’s upon this chaotic and formless scene that we find the “Spirit of God” hovering in **Genesis 1:2**.
- III. Now, since we’re already looking at **Gen. Ch. 1**, let’s just stay there and evaluate the surrounding content. This is Rule #2, we are evaluating the message of the immediate context.

NOTE: I don’t have the time to read the entire passage, but we’re going to be looking at **vss. 3-27**. This is that portion of **Genesis Ch. 1** which unfolds to us the creation of the heavens and earth we know today. This is OUR world, and we will see it was literally created in 6 days:

- A. In **vss. 3-5**, the Bible says, “*And God said let there be light*” (several things to note)
 - 1. God introduces light here, but it’s not the light of the sun or the moon. This is light from God Himself imposing on the darkness.
 - 2. Many experts agree (including the ancient Jewish sages and Rabbis): Technically, God didn’t create anything on the first day, not the way He does in the subsequent days. He just turned on His own supernatural light to intervene on that darkness of judgment. He calls that light “day.”

3. God then divides that light from the surrounding darkness. There is the pattern established for a solar cycle for each, and the Bible says, *“there was evening and morning, the first day.”*
- B. In **vss. 6-8**, the Bible says, *“And God said let there be a vault or a space between the waters to separate water from water....etc.”*
1. What’s happening here is God takes those waters of the deep over which the Spirit of God was seen hovering in **vs. 2**, and He divides them.
 2. Part of all that water stays on the earth, and the other part gets lifted up into the heavens or the atmosphere so there is a space or vault in between the two.
 3. He names the space in between the two, ‘*sky*,’ and the text says once more, *“there was evening and morning, the second day.”*
 4. (NOTE: There is a pattern here.)
 - a. Each creative process begins with *“And God said,”* and each follows with God remarking that it is *“good.”* You can read that right on through each element of creation.
 - b. Then each follows with: *“...and there was evening and morning,”* and then the next consecutive day is numerically called out.
- C. This contextual pattern continues for the next four days:
1. Day 3 is vegetation, trees, and fruit-bearing plants, etc.
 2. Day 4 is all the celestial elements: the sun, moon, and the stars. In other words, it’s here that God creates the heavens we see today. (NOTE: Up to this point, the light cycles have been sourced directly from God Himself. The creation of plants preceded the creation of the sun.)
 3. Day 5 is the creation of bird and fish life, and Day 6 is the creation of all creatures that roam on the land.
 4. And finally, on Day 6, God creates mankind in His image.
 5. We clearly see a literal 6-day Creation here, and some of you need to hear me say that as some of you have been panicking these past few weeks; you are already worried that I don’t believe in a literal 6-day Creation. Of course I do!
- D. Have you already picked up on a couple of very important things? They are things that are missing in this literal 6-Day Creation account:
1. First, nowhere in this 6-Day creative process do we read that God created the waters.
 2. Second, nowhere in this 6-Day creative process do we read that God created the foundations of the earth itself: the planet, that terrestrial ball on which we all careen through space on.
 3. **In verses 9 and 10**, God separates the water from the land element (meaning, He exposes the land that is there), much as he separated the waters to expose a space He called “sky”

4. But throughout this 6-Day creative process, we must come to grips with the fact that the water, and the planet itself, were pre-existing. They were present BEFORE the account of these six days.
5. In fact, **vs. 2** makes that point very clear. The “Spirit of God was hovering over the deep and the waters.” They were there BEFORE Day 1.
6. Now, I AM NOT suggesting a big bang, or any sort of evolution element here. NOT AT ALL! Some of you are also worried that I subscribe to those things, and I DO NOT!
7. What I AM suggesting is God created the waters and the foundations of the earth itself at some point prior, and those specific creative elements are not part of this 6-Day Creative process.
8. Here’s what you cannot do. You cannot claim that the text of **vss. 6-10** are where the earth and the waters are created. The text does not say that. In fact, the Bible is clear that these elements were present BEFORE the 6-Day creation process unfolded.

E. So, we are left with only two options:

1. Either God didn’t create the earth and the waters, and they were somehow ‘just there’ by some other means, and He started working with and through what He had, or....
2. God DID create these things, but they were at some prior point in time for some prior purpose.
3. This is where we get the phrase “the gap theory.” It suggests there is a gap of unknown time between **Gen. 1:1**, and **Gen. 1:2**.
 - a. This term, “the gap theory,” seems to have been first used by Thomas Chalmers in 1814.
 - b. What’s important about that, is Christian scholars were unpacking this Biblical truth long before Darwin published his heresy of evolution in 1859.
 - c. One of the common criticisms of “the gap theory” is that it is a reaction by Christians to try to explain away evolution, but history shows Christian scholars were ahead of evolution on the timeline.
4. Because of what **Genesis 1:1** says, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,*” we can, in fact, KNOW that He created all these things, but not as part of the literal 6-Day creation that put this earth together as we know it now.
5. The implications here are very clear. There was a different – a separate – time of Creation, and it was BEFORE the account of **vss. 3-27**.

F. So, the question arises:

1. “Do these implications conform to the intentions of the Hebrew terms and language we looked at before?”
2. (A second, and related question is this): “Are Rule #1 and Rule #2 of the proper Biblical methods of interpretation both conforming to the same idea here?”
 - a. The answer to both questions is, “Yes!”

- b. In Rule #1, the Hebrew terms there suggest God created the heavens and the earth, “BUT, the earth BECAME void, chaotic, formless, etc.” In the same vein, we see the darkness that is there implied as being there in judgement.
- c. In Rule #2, we see a pre-existing earth and water. We see a pre-existing state of darkness within which God introduces a supernatural light from Himself for the first three 24-hour days.
- d. The sun and moon and stars (AKA, “the heavens we know and recognize NOW), are not created until after that point.
- e. So, it looks like everything is suggesting the same thing. It looks like there was some sort of prior Creation of the heavens and earth, and that was different from the literal 6-Day Creation process most of us are already familiar with.
- f. We can also begin to connect some other dots. We can surmise that as part of whatever prior judgment had taken place, God used a planet-wide flood as part of that judgement. That’s pretty clear from **Genesis 1:2**.

IV. Now let’s dive into some really interesting stuff. Let’s engage with Rule #3 of the ‘proper rules of Biblical interpretation.’ That rule says whatever interpretations we draw, those conclusions have to agree with what all other passages on that topic, in the Bible, are also saying:

So...in no particular order:

A. **(Cf. Job 38:4-7)**

- 1. Here, Job and God are having a discussion, and God challenges Job with a reality check.
- 2. He asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” Here, God clearly states He was the one to create the earth at the very outset.
- 3. God continues in **vs. 7** to say, “All the morning stars and angels sang together and shouted for joy” at the ORIGINAL creation of the earth and heavens (NOTE: much of the rest of **Job Ch. 38** lays out all the unseen and original ways God put the heavens and earth together).
- 4. So here, we can also see that the angelic hosts were created BEFORE the heavens and earth were EVER created. They were present and rejoicing at God’s ‘*ex nihilo*’ creative process (Latin: creating something from nothing).
- 5. Whatever conclusion one could be tempted to draw about what **Genesis 1:2** might be saying, one thing is now very clear. God DID create the earth and the waters on it, but this was at a point BEFORE the literal 6-day Creation. But something then happened...
- 6. So far, all three rules of proper Biblical interpretation are suggesting the same thing. Let’s look at another passage and see what we learn from it:

B. **(Cf. Jeremiah 4:23)**

NOTE: Within this passage, and the context thereof, Jeremiah is looking ahead in a vision to coming judgment. I think this chapter has “near-far” prophetic application: Israel experienced judgment with the invasion of Babylon, but a far greater judgment in the Day of the Lord is yet forthcoming.

1. But in **vs. 23**, the Hebrew terms *‘tohu vabohu’* show up again. They are associated with....JUDGMENT AND UTTER DESTRUCTION.
2. This situation Jeremiah sees is so devastating, that the language here is the same as the original state of the world that we read about in **Genesis 1:2** where the world then was *“formless, empty, and void.”*
3. Some scholars make a pretty good case that Jeremiah here is given a vision of the world before the 6-day Creation, and he articulates that vision with future judgment.
4. Regardless, the larger point is there is this state of chaos and disruption as a result of God’s judgment. Again, this conforms to what the language and context of **Genesis Ch. 1** seems to be saying.

NOTE: One might wonder at this juncture, “Well, maybe God just created the heavens and earth that way in the very beginning, and then we’re just reading in **Genesis Ch. 1** where He later picked up the process once more...” (the Bible addresses this issue as well)

C. **(Cf. Isaiah 45:18)**

NOTE: In this verse, the Hebrew word *‘tohu’* – the same term used in **Genesis 1:2** – appears.

1. This verse tells us God did NOT create the heavens and earth in vain. He created it with purpose and intent – to be inhabited, in fact.
2. That seems to contradict what we read in **Genesis 1:2**, because there it says the earth was without form and void, but here in **Isaiah**, God says in effect, *“I didn’t create it that way.”*
3. So, something must have happened to result in God judging the heavens and earth and making them to be “formless and void” where at a prior point, they had not been.

NOTE: The most logical explanation here for these events is the fall of Lucifer. We know from that lesson that I referenced all the way back in May 2022, that Satan was ALREADY present, ALREADY evil, and ALREADY trying to disrupt the conditions of the literal 6-day Creation when Adam and Eve were walking around in their birthday suits.

D. **(Cf. Ezekiel 28:12-19)** This passage describes the fall of Lucifer, when he went from being a guardian cherub; a creation of perfection, beauty, brilliance, and wisdom to Satan, the ultimate embodiment of evil.

1. It’s a passage worth studying on your own, but you will see that Lucifer *“was in Eden, the garden of God,”* that he walked *“among the fiery stones,”* that he was *“adorned with ruby, topaz, emerald, etc. (and all the precious stones we know today),* and that he was on *“the holy mount of God.”*

2. We don't have time today to get into all the rabbit trails I could chase here, but suffice it to say that the **original heaven and earth** - the one about which all the angels, the sons of God, all the morning stars sang and shouted for joy over, was the original domain and kingdom of Lucifer.
 3. He was given dominion over this earth at that time; it was his kingdom and it was splendid.
 4. But then, according to **Ezekiel 28:15**, "*wickedness was found in him,*" and we see a great judgment after that.
 5. This fall of Lucifer and the judgment which follows that is given much more detail in **Isaiah 14:12-20** where it supplements the **Ezekiel 28** passage.
 6. Between the two, it is also suggested that the earth at that prior time, the earth over which Lucifer ruled had kingdoms, kings, commerce, and trade.
- E. I think the logical conclusion here is the reason the earth was "*without form, void, empty, etc. and under a cloak of supernatural darkness in **Genesis 1:2***" is this was the condition of the earth AFTER Lucifer fell and became Satan.
1. This was AFTER the heavens and earth of that prior time were judged as a result of his sin.
 2. Again, we don't know the interval of time between **Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 1:2**, and that's not really the point here.
 3. The bigger point is the earth of 'very old times' was judged and it BECAME a desolation, after which God re-created it in the literal 6-day Creation account.

This is given further support in the New Testament.

- F. **(Cf. 2 Peter 3:3-7)**. Peter makes several provocative points here:
1. There is a spiritual deficiency seen in those who mock or scoff at the notion of Jesus Christ's return.
 2. Peter then likens this same attitude, this same spiritual condition, to those who (and this is how he puts it) "*...deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens existed (that's **Genesis 1:1**) and the earth was formed out of water and by water (that's **Genesis 1:2**).*"
 - a. Peter makes the case that this is a willful choice to overlook this truth.
 3. Peter continues his assessment of the PAST by commenting on the first two verses of the Bible. He says, "*By these waters also the world of THAT time was deluged and destroyed (I believe this is a reference to the original earth of **Genesis 1:1**), and several more literal translations say the entire world "that then was," or, "of that time," PERISHED.*"
 - a. The point Peter is making is it was all done away with. It perished. It didn't exist anymore.
 - b. These are NOT the terms of the Noahic Flood. That earth as a whole did not perish. The trees and all the flora came back, the animals were protected and they survived and multiplied, and God rebooted humanity from 8 people.

- c. Certainly, the Noahic Flood entirely changed the world, the landscape, and even the climate. However, the world did not entirely perish for it's the same world you and I live in now.
- 4. Peter then looks at the PRESENT EARTH, and he sets up a contrast with the world he was referring to before in **vs. 7** where he says: *"By the same word, the PRESENT heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction, etc."*
- 5. Peter makes one more final comparison in **vs. 13** where he then looks to the FUTURE and he talks about: *"...looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,"* and that's what we've been studying the past several weeks.
- 6. So, Peter appears to present three separate heaven and earth events:
 - a. The past one from **Genesis 1:1**: the same one that Lucifer once walked in and ruled, but which God destroyed entirely.
 - b. The present one from **Genesis 1:3+**: that's the one we live in now. It also went through a great deluge or flood, but not to the same degree of judgment and destruction before.
 - c. And lastly, the future one: this is the new heaven and new earth, and to get from where we are now to that one, this present world will be destroyed by fire, Peter tells us.

NOTE: So, as I see it, all three rules of proper Biblical interpretation line up. They are all reinforcing the same thing here. They are all affirming three states of heaven and earth: a past one, the present one, and a future one.

- V. **CONCLUSION:** Let's quickly wrap up. "Who cares?" one might ask. "What does all this have to do with me and my life right now?" "Why are we even talking about this at all?"
 - A. I have three quick thoughts to leave you with. We will start with where we are right now in **2 Peter Ch. 3**
 - 1. First, Peter makes a connection between a callous attitude towards prophetic issues (specifically the promise of Jesus Christ's return), and a casual disregard for how God created and judged the earth before.
 - a. There is a similar spiritual problem with a wrong view of each.
 - b. The connection Peter makes is this: we can depend on God's Word. He demonstrated His word in the fuller account of creation (and the judgments of that time), and He will demonstrate it again in His return (and the judgements which are to come).
 - c. In other words, the very end will be no different than the very beginning. God can be counted on. He is reliable and His word is true.
 - 2. Second, have you ever felt wronged, oppressed, beaten down, discouraged, and tempted to feel upset, entitled, or perhaps even frustrated with God. The answer is, "Yes."

- a. Well, Job was there too, and we need to remember that passage we looked at in **Job Ch. 38**.
 - b. You see, Job and God weren't really having a discussion as I mentioned before, rather, God confronted Job in **vs. 3**. God said, *"Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me."*
 - c. Basically, God was telling Job, *"Suck it up. 'Have some 'kahunas.'" Be a man!"* God then proceeded to take all of Job's self-pity and despair and give Job a HUGE reality check instead.
 - d. How did God do that? He reminded Job of the fantastic, incomprehensible, omniscient, omnipotent, and mind-bending terms and conditions of the ORIGINAL creation of the ORIGINAL heavens and earth.
 - e. God had to get bigger in Job's eyes, and Job had to become smaller in his own. It's a healthy exchange.
 - f. You see, Job had put God in a box. It's what we all do when we face trials and hard times. We expect God to be someone we can comprehend and control. Sometimes we even demand that of God, and God uses those challenging times to grow our view of Him instead.
 - g. Sometimes God tells us to "be a man" or to "suck it up" as the street saying goes. A big picture perspective of Creation and of God arrests our pity party and helps us keep our eyes focused on a fuller picture of our proper place in this world.
 - h. It's similar to the perspective the Psalmist offered in **Psalms 8:3-4**, where he writes, *"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"*
 - i. When we have a correct view of God's Creation, it helps us to see ourselves properly, and it helps us to see God properly.
 - j. That's why the degenerate world, according to **Romans 1:20-21**, while they can see God's eternal power and divine nature in Creation, fail to glorify Him or give thanks to Him. They have a wrong response instead, and this condemns them.
3. Lastly, all of this we've learned today cultivates a whole new appreciation for our salvation (**Cf. Eph. 1:4**) – *"For He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His presence."*
- a. Long ago, far back in the earliest eons of time, God knew you. He chose you, and He had planned to save you.
 - b. Your salvation was laid out by God's great intent even *"before the foundation of the world."*
 - c. It's what we learned from **Revelation 13:8 and 17:8**. Our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life from *"before the foundation of the world."*
 - d. Why does it matter that we learn and understand these things we've talked about today? Because they give us a whole new awe-inspiring perspective

on how rich and deep and unfathomable God's grace is to you and I. They remind us of how much He really loves us.

- e. Before sin had expressed itself in Lucifer's fall, before sin came into this world through Adam, before there was the destruction and chaos of the ORIGINAL heaven and earth, and before the Creation of THIS heaven and earth, God had comprehended you – personally! He had put a plan in place to make you *“holy and blameless in His presence.”* He loves us that much!
- f. It's more amazing than words can describe, and I trust it gives you, in return, a new love for the greatness of God, and the amazing grace of Jesus Christ through which we gain our salvation.

LIMERICK

Before there was 'tohu vabohu'
There was the great fall of you-know-who,
But God had a plan
To redeem sinful man,
And remake this world we must go through.