

**“Let There Be Heavens”**

*Sermon Notes*

- **Day two isn’t about making heaven, but making *the heavens* - the heavens which are telling the glory of God**

*\*What was true on day two is true today, too...*

1. God commands the heavens (v.6)

2. God creates the heavens (v.7)

3. God christens the heavens (v.8)

**Next Week: Genesis 1:9-13 - “Let There Be Land”**

# MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of June 1st-7th

## Getting Started

1. Words matter, do they not? For example, on day two of creation, we learn that God created an expanse: “And God called the expanse *Heaven*.” (Genesis 1:8) Now, it’s clear enough that this “Heaven” is also what we would simply refer to as “sky” (see footnote 3 in the English Standard Version). Nevertheless, the translators of the majority of English Bible versions in the past and the present opt for the term “heavens” over “skies” in the over 200 occurrences of this word across the Old and New Testament. Why does this matter? What happens in your mind and heart when you hear the term “heaven” or “heavens” as opposed to “sky” or “skies”?

## Digging Deeper

2. Even more potentially problematic is our cultural term “space”. Doug Wilson put it this way: “If there was one thing that [C.S.] Lewis wanted people to quit calling the heavens, it would be *space*. Space makes us think of vast expanses, full of nothing but dead blackness, punctuated here and there by shapeless asteroids and inchoate oceans of flaming gas. In fact, the popular concept of ‘space’ has actually resulted in many moderns imagining it to be something pretty close to the biblical description of damnation - the outer darkness...Something has gone seriously wrong somewhere...The final Heaven and the heavens we can see at night are not two separated subjects. They are closely related to one another. To the ancient...eye what we could see in the night sky was not the ultimate Heaven, obviously not. But what we could see was thought of as the anterooms of Heaven, the outskirts.”<sup>1</sup> What do you think? Are Lewis and Wilson on to something here? What has been lost in our cultural adaptation of the terms “sky” and “space” for “the heavens”? What might be gained in our day to day lives by rehabilitating the biblical vocabulary?

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Wilson in the forward to Christiana Hale’s *Deeper Heaven: A Reader’s Guide to C.S. Lewis’s Ransom Trilogy*. Roman Roads Press: Moscow, ID. 2020. pp. xv and xvii.

## Open Your Bible to Genesis 1:1...

3. In the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, we encounter references to “the heavens” well over a dozen times. Scan over these occurrences as a group: 1:1, 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1; 2:4; 2:19, 2:20. What do you learn about this all-important aspect of the created order? How many truths spring to the surface along these lines as you read and reflect on this theme?

4. Take a look at Psalm 2:4; 115:3, 16; and 123:1. Taken together, what do these verses tell us about the heavens? Why does this matter? How might our daily lives be different if we were disciplined enough to look up for deliberate periods of time?

5. Consider the following sampling of verses: Deuteronomy 10:14; Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 57:5, 11; 108:5; 113:4; 57:10; 89:2; 103:11; 108:4; Jeremiah 31:37; Psalm 71:19; 97:6; Proverbs 8:27; Isaiah 55:9; Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 8:1; 57:5, 11; 108:5; 113:4. We could almost say that God has placed a systematic theology in the sky. How many different attributes of God can you find in these verses? Can you bear witness to the importance of the heavens in your walk with the Lord? How do Paul’s words in Romans 1:19-20 confirm these truths?

6. Not only (to use Paul’s terms) is God *plain* to us in the created order because God has *shown* it to us...not only he is *clearly perceived* in the things that have been made so that we are *without excuse*...it’s also the case that the heavens themselves are described as preachers of the glory of God throughout Scripture. Ponder these passages together: Psalm 19:1-6; 50:6; 89:5; 96:11; 148:4; Isaiah 44:23; 49:13; Jeremiah 51:48. Why is it absolutely essential that we spend regular time outdoors as often as we are able to do so? What might be the effect of prolonged periods of time indoors, before our screens, etc?

7. The heavens are repeatedly described as a place from which God (or something from God) “comes down” in Holy Scripture. Read through and discuss the following verses together: Psalm 18:9; 114:5; Isaiah 64:1; Matthew 3:16; Acts 7:56; 10:11. Article 9 of our EFCA Statement of Faith proclaims that: “We believe in the personal, bodily, and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a

time known only to God, demands constant expectancy, and as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and energetic mission.” While we are clearly not simply to stand staring at the sky all day long (Acts 1:9-11), it is certainly the case that Jesus will indeed one day return on the clouds of heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). How does Article 9 of our Statement of Faith serve to focus our attention in view of his soon return?

8. 2 Peter 3 contains no fewer than five references to “the heavens”. Read carefully through this remarkable chapter as a group. How is Peter using this term? What great and mighty realities lay ahead for “the heavens” (3:1-10)? How ought we to live as a result (3:11-18)?