

- Gen. 1:6** God said:
Let there be a dome amid the waters (haMaiyim),
and let it separate waters from waters!
- 7 God made the dome
and separated the waters that were below the dome
from the waters that were above the dome.
It was so.
- 8 God called the dome: (Shamaiyim) Sky!
There was setting, there was dawning: second day.

- Gen. 1:9** God said:
Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place,
and let the dry land be seen!
It was so.
- 10 God called the dry land: Earth! and the gathering of the waters he called: Seas!
God saw that it was good.

There are a lot of really fun things about being a Minister, and one that I really love is being asked lots of questions. There will be questions coming later this morning which I eagerly await. I actually picked some special prayers for this day that I have never picked in my entire life, but I found them and decided that the time had come for them to make their debut. I believe on September 29 there are churches in the world which will celebrate the Feast Day of Michael and the Angels. So our two angel prayers are in the bulletin today.

What do I know about angels? Not much. I know that they have one main function: they are usually messengers for God. They have good Hebrew names. A few are great warriors. Actually ancient Jewish people would look at the stars at night and believe that each glimmer was in fact an angel waiting to be commanded by God, who was called Adonai Tzavaoth, or as we would say “The LORD of Hosts.” LORD of the angels who are waiting to be commanded. People have asked me about angels in the past. In all honesty, I cannot tell them much. It is far beyond my pay grade and ability to understand. Technically, according to our Jewish cousins, angels are created on the 2nd Day of Pre-Creation, along with other wonderful things. So as we certainly know, there are lots of things *we do not know*. We can at times change that sentence by one little word and say that there are things *we did not know*, suggesting that we learn new things, and then we see the world differently. I am hoping that today will be one of those days.

We have a nice picture on the screen today and on the bulletin of the Earth and Moon and Sun. The crazy thing though is that this picture in no way matches what we are told in the Book of Genesis about the beginning of Creation. Here are a few questions: Do we know that the Earth is round? Yes we do. We have pictures from astronauts, our “star sailors” as the word literally means. Do we know for sure that if we go up into the sky we will have less and less of our fragile and paper-thin atmosphere, and eventually there is no atmosphere left? Yes. Hundreds of people have been up there. They took pictures. They have seen a world that does not match what we are told in the Book of Genesis. That is a simple fact. What are we actually told in the Book of Genesis? Well, we are told about a world that looks more like this: (look at the Nahum Sarna picture). This does not in any way look like the front of our bulletin. But it matches the description we are given in Genesis. According to Genesis, there should be a rather flat piece of ground, there are some pillars to hold something else up, and it looks like it has some kind of lid on it. Imagine a big pan lid, and there are things below the lid and under the lid. In Genesis, in the original language, and I remember being struck by this in seminary as my Hebrew started to develop. Let me share some fun words with you quickly, and those of you with copies can see this. But we have these words:

For many years I have known that Day 2 of Creation gives us this thing called RAQUIA. Now I have had a chance to dig more deeply as to what on earth that means, and it means this: it is something that is hard and sturdy, and you make it with a mallet by pounding on metal, just like they used to do to make pan lids long ago. Other languages try to call it the sturdy strong thing. Most Bibles do an awful job trying to translate this. In English they almost always call it “the Firmament.” OK. Thanks, I guess! It is something that must be pounded out, like a lid. Now we need to do a little Hebrew lesson. I have never gone into this much detail before regarding this day of Creation, but it is really great! But I need you to see and hear a few words. (start to translate) What is the dominate word that we hear in this line regarding Day 2 of Creation? It is Maiyim. BTW, the word for the SKY is actually

Shamaiyim. How great is that? In their ancient minds, the two things are totally connected. Let me translate for us. God says that there needs to be a firm LID that will separate the waters from the waters. The LID is going to help create an air pocket where something good can happen. In fact, it will be where WE happen.

This is really fascinating stuff. It is IN THE BIBLE. But does it match the reality that we have discovered through Science, a great word that simply refers to what we KNOW, does it match? No, it does not. Let me make this simple and abrupt: we know what we know, we know that the Earth is not at all the way it says in Genesis 1. And we should be smart enough to understand that Genesis has never claimed to be a Science Book. It has never claimed to be a Physics book. It has never claimed any of that. It has been imposed upon the Bible, especially in the last 110 years. The Bible could not have understood outer space, not could it have understood the details of human genetics and gestation and biology. It did the best it could in its ancient world to explain what others also believed. But it is never saying “We are the ultimate authority on earth science and biology and chemistry, etc.” It never does this. And yet we have placed this upon it.

Let me close with a mystery. 39 years ago on Friday night, my wife and I had our first date, which was quite good. We have loved each other ever since. We have been attracted to each other ever since. But my wife and I can also tell you that we had been attracted to the opposite gender ever since we were in Kindergarten. Neither of us ever decided to be attracted to the other sex. We just know that we are. We don't know why or how that attraction works as it does. It is in our wiring, how we were knit together in our mother's wombs. But we also know that some people seem to be attracted in different ways than we are. Do we understand that? No. We just know that it is. And I would humbly suggest that in the same way that our Bible could have never known about outer space and our round planet, in the same way it is not a biology book, and it has never claimed to be one. And just maybe there is more for us to understand about how all this works. Why am I attracted as I am to others? As we have learned, may we learn more to

understand. Thanks for listening, and if you have questions about General Conference from this week, I hope you'll stay. AMEN.