

This verse is the most mysterious verse in the chapter.

**Gn.1:2 and the earth was formless and empty** (Heb. TOHOO & BOHOO), **darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.**

It's mysterious, because formlessness, emptiness, darkness and the deep are generally considered bad things. Why would God make a bad world? Why such an ominous scene?

The word **formless** is the Hebrew word TOHOO, and it means "an uninhabitable place" "a trackless wasteland where no one can live."

**Dt.32:10 In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. lit: in a TOHOO of howling wasteland."**

It describes a place so uninhabitable that even if an entire caravan tries to pass through, they will all die - Job 6:18 **Caravans turn aside from their routes; they go up into the wasteland (TOHOO) and perish.**

It is a place with no roads, no paths, no tracks - Job 12:24 **he sends them wandering through a trackless waste. (TOHOO)** (also Ps.107:40)

In Isa.24:10 it's used of a city that has been broken to pieces, and it describes outer space. Job 26:7 **He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; (TOHOO)**

It's used in the context of judgment.

**Isa.34:5 My sword...descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed...10 its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again. 11 The desert owl and screech owl will possess it; the great owl and the raven will nest there. God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of TOHOO and the plumb line of BOHOO.**

So a TOHOO and BOHOO is a place that is barren, desolate, uninhabited, uninhabitable. It is not fit for humanity or any other life.

I know of no other word in the Hebrew language that describes a condition more threatening and hostile to human life than TOHOO. Any place that is TOHOO is utterly uninhabitable by human beings.

And that's the way the earth was in Gn.1:2.

In the movie Lion King, when Simba finally comes back with his friends to fight and take back the pridelands from his evil uncle, they get up on an overlook at instead of the lush, vibrant pridelands he remembered, there was a desolate wasteland.

That scene is a great picture of a TOHOO & BOHOO.

And one of the friends sees it and says, "We're going to fight your uncle for this? Talk about your fixerupper."

Are we to believe that's how God made the world at first – so the heavens and earth were one giant fixerupper?

I said no word describes a condition more threatening and hostile to human life, but a close second is the Hebrew word TEHOM ("the abyss" or "the deep").

In the ancient near east the people believed that the sea is the way it is because not even the gods were able to subdue it. They believed the creation was the result of a massive struggle between the gods and the forces of chaos.

The gods were not able to defeat chaos, but they were able to push back its frontiers so it was limited mostly to the sea. So not even the gods can tame the dark, threatening forces of chaos in the sea.

And this is where the critics try to make the case that Genesis is just a copy of the myths of the day – the Jews just changed the name of the God involved.

And if v.2 weren't already ominous and threatening enough with the TOHOO and BOHOO and the description of the Abyss dominating the world – no land, on top of all that the whole place was completely dark.

Light did not yet exist at this time.

Does darkness have a negative connotation in Scripture? It certainly does. After Job was devastated with his losses, in his groaning he cursed the day of his birth. Listen to how he cursed it:

Job 3:3-7 "**May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!' 4 That day-may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it. 5 May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. 6 That night-may thick darkness seize it...**

There is no question darkness, in the vast majority of Scripture, represents evil or destruction or something very negative.

There is no question the world described in Gn.1:2 is very hostile to any form of created life. This is a world in which only God could exist.

How did the earth get to be such a horrendously inhospitable place?

Traditionally two options have been argued. Either God created the heavens and earth good, and something happened to ruin them (and Gn.1 is the story of the restoration or re-creation of the heavens and the earth), or God started out the creation by creating a bad earth and then fixing it up.

### **The Gap Theory**

The first view is referred to by the scholars as the restitution view. It's popularly known as the "gap theory."

Proponents of this view translate v.2 to say **and the earth became formless and empty, and darkness...** The word translated **was** can mean "became." (Gn.3:20)

In this view verse 2 is regarded as a sequential clause after verse 1. but Merrill F. Unger, while holding this model, thinks that verse 2 is a circumstantial clause with verse 1.

This view is not just a reaction against modern science. It gained prominence in the late 1800s as a result of a book by G.H. Pember called *Earth's Earliest Ages*. The view became widely popular in the 1900s mainly as a result of the Scofield reference Bible notes.

In 1970 A.C. Custance wrote a major defense of this view by making a case that the view has its roots in early Jewish tradition and existed throughout church history.

Arthur Custance, in his book *Without Form and Void*, attempts to show that this interpretation has its roots in early Jewish tradition and throughout the history of the church. Unfortunately, this book, which is filled with much helpful information, is marred by egregious errors.

While Custance wavered on the question of the earth's age, he favored a young earth.

*And I do not think that the biblical account can ever be made to accommodate the antiquity that is still being demanded. Personally, I am convinced that the arguments for this vast antiquity will in due course be modified by fresh evidence and the Bible vindicated, as it always has been.* Arthur C. Custance, *Two Men Called Adam* (Brockville, Ontario: Doorway Publications, 1983  
., p. 249.

So it's not just a knee-jerk argument designed to respond to modern scientific challenges. In fact, it doesn't really help in that regard anyway, because light was not created until day one, and the sun didn't exist until day 4.

So we can't explain the fossil record by postulating a world that existed for millions of years before the sun or even light existed. Somehow I don't think the naturalistic scientists who mock the young earth idea would be too impressed with an old earth, but no light until 6000 years ago.

Proponents of this view point out that the phrase **formless and empty** occurs only two other places in the Bible, and in both places it describes a condition that resulted from God's judgment. (Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11)

Therefore that condition must be a result of God's judgment in Gn.1:2. There must have existed some Pre-Genesis world that was judged by God and reduced to a state of being **formless and empty**.

And Isa.45:18 comes right out and says, **He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a TOHOO, but formed it to be inhabited...**

So Isa. says God did not create the world a TOHOO.

It is also suggested that this view helps explain the mysterious career of Satan. In the record of the fall in Genesis 3, if the serpent is animated by Satan, then Satan appears for the first time without introduction, and he's already fallen

& evil.

This view would give time for Satan and the fallen angels to do whatever they did, and perhaps their judgment resulted in the heavens and earth being TOHOO and BOHOO.

The restitution view has been rejected by the overwhelming majority of scholars, however, because it runs into grammatical problems.

The only way to make the theory work is to think of v.2 as a sequential clause (“In the beginning God created...and then the earth became formless and empty...and then (v.3) God said “Let there be light...”

That doesn't fit what is written in the Hebrew. V.3 is sequential, but v.2 is not. There are not very many hard and fast rules in the Hebrew language, but this is one.

v.3 begins with a *waw* consecutive.” But v.2 begins with a conjunctive *waw*. The *waw* conjunctive may introduce various types of clauses but it does not introduce an independent sequential clause. It is inconceivable that Moses would have used a construction which does not indicate sequence in contrast to other constructions open to him, if this had been his intent.

Also, the idea that the word translated **was** in v.2 should be “became” is also grammatically untenable, and has been soundly rejected by Hebrew scholars.

If Moses wanted to communicate that he would have had to put the verb first in the sentence and attached a preposition to the word **formless**. (Walton p.72)

As for formlessness and emptiness having to be a judgment; that would be to read the Bible backwards. Gn.1:1 is not a reference to Jer.4. Jer.4 is a reference to Gn.1.

Gn.1 says God started from scratch and made the world. Jer.4 (and Isa.34) say that God judged His people by dismantling them and un-creating them and reducing them to scratch.

That doesn't require that the same thing happened in the beginning.

The fallaciousness of the reasoning used by the proponents of the “gap theory” may be illustrated as follows. Let us suppose that a child is given a new tinker-toy set. After taking the pieces out of the manufacturer's box, he constructs a derrick. But after a while he becomes frustrated with the derrick and so, in anger, he dismantles his production and replaces the sticks and spools into their container. Now, would anyone wish to conclude that because the child dismantled the set in fury and replaced it into its original container, that therefore the manufacturer had also originally dismantled the set in fury and put the pieces into the box? Of course, we would have to admit that this is a possibility, but it certainly could not be proved by the action of the child.

And as for Isa.45:18 (**God did not create the world a TOHOO**), like most the references in Scripture to creation, the reference is to the entire creation week as a whole, not to the very first event.

Isaiah's point is that even though the Promised Land now lies desolate and uninhabited, God didn't created to be a trackless waste. He never intended it to be uninhabited, which implies He will restore Israel to the land.

But that says nothing about the pre-day one condition of the earth.

If God wanted us to think about some intervening event, He could have just said that. But instead He said something that rules out any intervening event.

And, He prefaced Gn.1 with the words “**In the beginning**.” That's significant, because God could have had the first words of the Bible simply be “**God created the heavens and the earth**.”

But He chose not to say that. He intentionally added the phrase **In the beginning**, and that phrase has to mean something.

So that leaves us with the other view: that God must have created a negative situation.

This is the traditional view, and it has the support of the majority of Jewish and Christian interpreters.

Some say the text is saying, “God created the heavens and earth *as* a formless void.”

Others say, “No, it doesn't say anything about how the formless void came to be. The creation account just picks up the story from there.”

But even with that second variation, which is gaining popularity among modern scholars, still logic requires that the

formless void had to have been created by God, since it can't be eternal.

### Objections

The phrase, **the heavens and the earth** never has the meaning of disorderly chaos but always of an orderly world. Doesn't 1Ti.4:4 say plainly that **everything God created is good**?

As we will see in this chapter, the whole point of creation, if not the definition of creation is to bring about structure and order and beauty. So it would almost seem to be an oxymoron to say, "God created a chaos. God created a dark, threatening, ruined wasteland."

That's what the pagans believed about creation – that the forces of chaos were too much for the gods, and they weren't quite able to subdue them." So if the Bible says that the earth was TOHOO and BOHOO, a dark, uninhabitable wasteland, and we are going to reject the idea that it became bad after the creation, and we are going to reject the idea that it was created bad initially, what's left?

I would like to suggest an alternative to both views. How about this: God initially brought it into being as a dark abyss and a TOHOO and BOHOO, but that wasn't bad?

It's true those things are negative throughout most of Scripture, but that's because human beings exist. Things that are threatening to human beings are only bad if human beings exist.

50-foot waves out at sea, and storms and cool temperatures and the lack of oxygen and the tremendous pressure at the bottom – those things are all bad because they are threatening to human life.

But if there were no such thing as human life, what would be bad about them?

For us, some of the spectacular things we observe in outer space are as TOHOO and BOHOO as it gets. There is no way we could survive on a star or on another planet.

But is there any doubt that those places are beautiful and pleasing to God? Those things aren't bad. They are wonderful.

God can walk on a star all He wants. He could take a big breath on the moon and He wouldn't get cold on Pluto.

Anyone with a telescope knows that while those places are not hospitable to human life, they are still beautiful and wonderful and ordered and structured and in some cases complex.

I believe the TOHOO and BOHOO before day one was not a bad thing at all. It was not a terrible, threatening chaos. I think the best assumption is that it was every bit as good as anything else God ever did.

Is the sea ever a threat to God? Never in the least! The only interaction we see between God and the sea in Scripture is when He keeps on using it to do His bidding.

Gentleness is only a good thing if there is something that is fragile. We praise a guy if he is gentle with his wife, or if he gently handles a little infant.

But gentleness is no real virtue while he is out using a jackhammer to try to tear up some pavement. What would be the point of gentleness then?

What would be the point of making food in a place where there is no life? What would be the point of putting oxygen there?

It may very well be that the purpose of this mysterious description in v.2 is so that we understand that all the things that threaten us the most do not threaten God in the least.

Genesis one is nothing like the ANE myths. In those myths there is a life and death struggle between chaos and the gods.

In Gn.1 there isn't the remotest hint of struggle. The scene is as calm as it can possibly be. When you look up the words used in this verse, the idea that dominates your mind is tranquillity.

The chaos that threatens the very lives of the other gods is pleasant to God. It's no threat. Nothing is.

I think the point is not that there was chaos in v.2, but that for God there is no such thing as chaos. While God is the only being in existence there is no meaning to the word "threatening" or "dangerous" or "inhospitable."

Perhaps another reason was to show us that not only did God do all the organizing, but the creating as well.

For us, creating is nothing more than organization. We talk about a painter creating a work of art - just re-arrangement. Faith's confusion about who made our house.

But God created the raw materials *ex nihilo* and then he arranged them with perfect order. This was the foundation of all that God was to create.

But there was nothing wrong with the raw materials, which were not fit for human life, because there were no humans yet.

What would be the point of light when the only being in existence can see in the dark just fine?

Why would He create light, when all light it is a means to enable optically dependent beings to perceive at a distance?

God doesn't need photons. He can perfectly perceive everything without any light waves coming His way.

For us, darkness is a negative thing. But is it a negative thing for God in Scripture? Let's look and see.

## Darkness

**and darkness was over the surface of the deep**

Does darkness imply something bad?

If we skip ahead to ch.15, when Almighty God visited Abram, v.12 **says a thick and dreadful darkness came over Abram.**

Then when God made His covenant with Abram and passed through the animal parts while Abram slept, He did so, according to Gn.15:17 in darkness.

In another key event in redemptive history God descended down onto Mount Sinai where He gave the 10 commandments in Ex.20.

At that moment the mountain was enveloped by an ominous cloud, and v.21 **says The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.**

Years later when Moses reminded the people of this event, he said,

**Dt.4:10-12 Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb...11You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. 12Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire.**

He went on: **Dt.5:22-24 These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness...23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. 24And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty,**

The awesome, fearful darkness that envelops God is all part of His glory and majesty.

**2Sa.22:10-12 He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet...12He made darkness his canopy around him-the dark rain clouds of the sky.**

**1Ki.8:10-13 When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. 11And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. 12Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud;**

Darkness is only a problem for people. It's no problem for God.

It's like air. Too much air is a calamity for a fish, but if you're not a fish, it's not a bad thing at all. So it's a misunderstanding if we think of darkness as representing evil or anything bad.

What about the earth in its initial, foundational stage? Was that stage of creation an ugly, negative chaos? What does the Bible say specifically about that stage of the creation?

As I told you, most references to the creation refer to the week as a completed whole. But is there any place in the Bible that talks about the stage of creation? Is there a passage that discusses the creation before there were mountains or oceans or fields or dust? Yes.

Pr.8 discusses the time **when there were no oceans...when there were no springs... before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills...before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.** (vv.23-26).

The passage goes on to say that was the time **when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, ...29 and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.**

The foundation stage of creation is referred to many, many times.

1 Sa.2:8 **"For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world.**

Ps.102:25 **In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth**

Ps.104:5 **He set the earth on its foundations;**

Isa.48:13 **My own hand laid the foundations of the earth**

Isa.51:12 **Who are you that you fear mortal men... 13 that you forget the LORD your Maker, who...laid the foundations of the earth,**

Isa.51:16 **I have put my words in your mouth...I who laid the foundations of the earth,**

Zech.12:1 **This is the word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth**

Job 38:4 **"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?**

Was the earth, in that foundational stage, some formless blob? Was it the kind of thing a preschooler would come up with with some playdough? No.

Pr.3:19 **By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations**

It was something that required divine wisdom. It was NOT a total chaos.

Just because it wasn't suitable for us doesn't mean it was a worthless waste. Actually it was a highly complex wonderful work of infinite power and intelligence.

How important is the foundation? If building a house, do you say, don't worry about the foundation...?

Job 38:5 **Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?**

God made it just the right size. (The imagery of the tape measure is for our benefit - actually God can just eye-ball it) Which is pretty good considering he made it a sphere (I can't even draw a circle).

7900 miles from pole to pole (7926 at the equator)

24,900 miles around. 200 millions sq mi.

6600 billion billion tons

If you found yourself at the center of the earth, to get out you would have to travel through over 800 mi of the inner core believed to be a giant ball of metal, more than 4 times the density of granite.

then another 5300 miles through the outer core, which is liquid.

Then another 1800 mi through the mantle believed to be a mineral. This is partially molten (the coolest part of the trip).

Now you are almost home. You have reached the crust. This is so thin it is like an eggshell. All you have to do now is travel through about 15 mi of rock, and if are digging in the right spot, this will take you to the bottom of the deepest hole man has ever drilled (less than 10 miles deep) – less than half way through the egg shell.

I don't know if God had created gravity yet, but if not He knew He was going to, so everything had to be the right size and mass.

The science of isostasy studies the equilibrium of the earth's crust.

You can't have any unequal weight when you have a giant ball 8000 miles thick spinning at 1000 mph.

So He built into the earth a mechanism to adjust to changes. If you think of the earth like a giant water balloon – if you press down on one place, another place compensates by bulging out.

That's exactly what the earth does. Land masses that not long ago were obviously at sea level, with beaches and sea cliffs, are now far above sea level, because the weight of the ice sheet has been removed.

God made a balanced earth and designed it to maintain that balance.

Now all the measurements have been made, everything is just right. All the weights balance, all the masses are exact. It is ready to be spun into motion. God took this 8000 mile thick globe, tilted it 23.5 degrees, and gave it a spin - and it hasn't stopped yet.

Just the right speed - about 1000 mph. It's just right for the length of days and nights, and the effect on the trade winds, etc.

Just the right angle. 23.5 degrees is just right for global temperatures and growing seasons throughout the world.

The mass of the earth is anything but simple. The ancient people may have thought the earth to be very simple – a bunch of dirt and water.

But in reality the earth is made out of countless different kinds of rocks, which are all formed out of the thousands of different minerals, which are composed of millions of different compounds, which are all made of various combinations of 91 basic elements, which are made up of protons, neutrons and electrons, and the protons and neutrons are made up of quarks, and quarks are held together by gluons.

The most plentiful element in the earth's crust is oxygen, accounting for about 47 percent of it's weight.

Gluons, quarks, bosons, leptons, protons, neutrons, atoms, elements, compounds, minerals - all combined together with staggering complexity, interdependence, structure and order.

This place is no blob of playdough.

The structure of each of the continents is extremely complex. Even in the foundational stage, when it was a TOHOO and BOHOO, the earth was an astonishing display of God's power and wisdom.

**Job 38:6 who laid its cornerstone-- 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?**

Apparently God made the angels at the very beginning.

Theistic evolutionists say that maybe God created the raw material, set natural "laws" into motion, and then just sat back and watched for billions of years while everything took shape.

But the picture here is of a great, spectacular event that makes those angels SHOUT out of sudden rush of sheer exhilaration. They see what God does, and it is so fantastic they can't contain their excitement and thrill and they literally let it out in a loud shout of joy!

Does that sound like something that took place over billions of years?

The creation of the earth was a monumental, fantastic event. If God had stopped here it would have been an amazing creation. But there is more...

## **The Deep**

**darkness was over the surface of the deep**

At this point the entire globe was covered with water - no dry ground. One massive ocean. No life. No seaweed, no fish, no algae, no bacteria. Totally steril.

This is referred to in Job 38:8 "**Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness,**

You say, "A sterile ocean? So what? That's not all that impressive." The Psalmist doesn't agree:

**Ps.104:5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.**

He saw that as cause for praise.

"But how hard is it to just create a totally flooded earth?"

**Pr.3:19 By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; 20 by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.**

What is so great about the deep? The ancient reader might see this and think, "We need some supply of drinking water, but are the oceans really necessary? Is that really an indicator of God's wisdom?"

Water is the most useful substance there is. It controls climates and weather, and is necessary in almost all chemical reactions.

It helps convert rocks to soil, it shapes most of the landscape, we use it for transportation, cooking, washing heating, putting out fires, treating diseases, drinking, skiing, snowshoing, sledding, skating, ice-climbing, swimming, boating, fishing, water parks, rafting (Ex.2).

All living things are made up of mostly water. Babies are about 75-85 % water, and an adult man is about 65-75 %. (We are drying out).

Water carries food to the cells and waste away from them. It keeps us warm in the cold and cool in the heat, and in most cases if you loses just 15% of the water in your body you will die.

There are 3 kinds of water: norm, heavy and super-heavy. It is basically incompressible (hydraulic machines).

Like most things, it expands when heated. But unlike most things, it also expands when cooled. If it acted like most things and contracted, ice would sink, it would never melt, gradually all water would freeze and the earth would be uninhabitable.

It has an extremely high specific heat, which means it takes tremendous amounts of energy to heat.

That's why 80 degree air is hot and 80 degree water feels cold. When the 80 degree air touches your 100 degree body, it warms right up to that temp. Water stays at 80 so you feel the 20 degree difference.

This is an important feature. Otherwise plants, animals and people, which are all made up mostly of water, would never survive any significant temperature change.

Also, that property protects the entire climate. Large bodies of water absorb heat all summer (cooling the climate) and release it all winter (warming the climate). Water vapor has the same effect.

God made water with surface tension. Place a needle on water and it will "float"

Water is the great solvent. More things will dissolve in water than in any other substance. That's why it is good for washing - it dissolves dirt.

God gave it properties so the earth could continually shower itself. We have over our heads at this moment millions of tons of water suspended above us.

The average farmer in MN, free of charge, gets about half a million gal of water per acer every year.

The average yearly rainfall of Missouri would fill a lake 20 ft deep and 250 miles long and 60 miles wide.

The creation of water does indeed display His power, wisdom and kindness.

### **and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.**

The word translated **Spirit** (RUACH) means "wind" "breath" or "spirit." Since the original readers didn't know about the Trinity, how would they have understood this phrase?

Would they have pictured a supernatural wind blowing over the waters, or would they have interpreted it to refer to God's Spirit in the sense that every person has a spirit?

They did not have knowledge of the person of the Holy Spirit, but they did realize that there is a sense in which God was present and active here on earth, invisible, while still being enthroned in heaven. They referred to that as God's Spirit.

In Ps.139:7 **Spirit** is parallel with **presence** (face).

The Spirit of God was spoken of in personal terms (as a "He" rather than an "it").

In Neh.9:20 the Spirit instructs.

In Isa.63:10 He is grieved, and He becomes their enemy and fights against them

The chore in OT times was to convince the people that there was only one God. So in His mercy He didn't confuse them with details about the Trinity.



Just enough was revealed to protect them from polytheism on the one hand and pantheism on the other. The Holy Spirit is none other than the one true God Himself, the Holy Spirit is present and active here on earth, but distinct from the creation.

The only thing that was not revealed until the NT is that He is a distinct person.

After studying the term, I think they probably would have read Gn.1:2 and thought of both God's Spirit and a wind – God's invisible yet powerful presence stirring up the deep.

The word **hovering** is used in Dt.32:11 to describe a bird hovering over its young to protect them.

The Spirit of God is overseeing His creation. He is right there, on site, taking care of His creation.

And not only is the sea not fighting against God - it is dependent upon God's care like a baby bird.

There is no life and death struggle here, unless you want to say the sea is struggling to exist and is being sustained by the Creator.

Not only is there no struggle against the forces of the sea but according to Isa.51:15, the sea needs God to stir it up to even get the waves going

**For I am the LORD your God, who churns up the sea so that its waves roar--  
the LORD Almighty is his name**

The waves don't threaten Him – He's the One who has to stir them up.

God made the sea, and here he is moving along over it in this mysterious picture of the Creator doing the work of creation on site – not remotely from heaven, but right there on the job site.

The point is God is very deliberate about His work of creation. It's a picture of great care.

Some of you look out over the circumstances in your life right now and all you see is TOHOO and BOHOO – your life seems like one big fixerupper.

Your circumstances appear to be uninhabitable and hostile to human life.

But you can be assured that the Spirit of God is hovering over the abyss of your life too.

Perhaps there is more to the landscape than meets the eye. Perhaps the wilderness is more beautiful than you realize.

Perhaps the angels observe what God has done with your life and shout for joy over the amazing wisdom and power and love of God.

If the TOHOO and BOHOO of the heavens and the earth were no problem for God, we can trust Him in our lives to create beauty and glory that is at least as great as the heavens and the earth, because **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!** (2Co. 5:17)

**BENEDICTION: Eph.2:4-10 because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus... 10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

# Grammatical details on Gn.1:2

## The Precreation Chaos Theory

This view says God created the heavens and earth formless and empty. It has two variations, based on different grammatical analyses of the text. Some regard Genesis 1:1 as a dependent clause while others regard that verse as a summary statement explicated in the remainder of the chapter.

### The View That Verse 1 Is A Dependent Clause

This view is widely held in scholarly circles today, and has been accepted into the last three versions of the Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant communities.

Generally (with some exceptions) this view says:

1:1 Protasis: "When God began to create . . ."

1:2 Parenthesis: "the earth being/was . . ."

1:3 Apodosis: "God said. f "

*Lexical and grammatical arguments.*

If the word translated **in the beginning** is in the construct state, then verse 1 must be a dependent clause. If it is in the absolute state, the traditional rendering will stand.

But if he really intended his reader to take **in the beginning** as a construct, why did he not use this less ambiguous construction?

More convincing that the word should be understood as an absolute is the fact that all ancient versions (LXX, Vulgate, Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, Targum Onkelos) construed the form as absolute and verse 1 as an independent clause.

In sifting all the data, two facts emerge: (1) In both the Jewish and Christian tradition, the first word in the Bible was unanimously understood as being in the absolute state and the first verse was considered an independent clause. (2) Moses could not have used any other construction to denote the first word as in the absolute state, but he could have opted for a different construction to indicate clearly the construct state. It is therefore concluded that the text which has come down to us should be understood as an independent and not a dependent clause.

It is concluded, therefore, that no objection can be raised against this interpretation on syntactical grounds.

### The View That Verse 1 Is A Summary Statement

The state described in verse 2 as existed before the creation spoken of in the Bible.

This view understands verse 1 as an independent clause and verse 2 as a circumstantial clause connected with verse 3. According to this view, verse 1 is a summary statement, or formal introduction, which is explicated in the rest of the narrative.

It has already been shown from the study of the word **in the beginning** that verse 1 is best construed as an independent clause. But it is yet to be demonstrated that verse 2 should be construed as a circumstantial clause to the main clause of verse 3.

the second account of creation clause structures exhibits the following pattern:

1. *Introductory summary statement:*

"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created f " (Gen. 2:4).

2. *Circumstantial clause* of the pattern WAW + noun + verb (hyh

) describing a negative state before creation:

"Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth" (2:5-6).

3. *Main clause* of the pattern WAW consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation:

"Then the LORD God formed man f " (2:7).

It can readily be seen that this is the same pattern exhibited in 1:1-3, as follows.

1. *Introductory summary statement:*

"In the beginning God created the cosmos" (1:1).

2. *Circumstantial clause* of the pattern WAW + noun + verb (hyh) describing the negative state before creation:

"Now the earth was devoid of form f " (1:2).

3. *Main clause* of the pattern WAW consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation:

"And God said f " (1:3).

A similar construction is also found in the introduction to Genesis 3. That story, however, lacks a separate introductory statement

because it is a substory of the creation record about man introduced by 2:4. Here, too, is the same pattern:

1. *Introductory summary statement:* (2:4)]
2. *Circumstantial clause* of the form WAW + noun + verb (hyh “Now the serpent was more crafty f “ (3:1a).
3. *Main clause* of the form WAW consecutive + prefixed conjugation form describing the creation of sin: “And he said f “ (3:1b).  
In addition, Young is able to cite many examples where the circumstantial clause precedes the main verb.

Custance argues that the word translated **was** must have its active sense “to become” and have the force of the pluperfect tense. Thus he would translate verse 2, “But the earth had become.” This suggestion is highly unlikely.

It should be noted that in the parallel circumstantial clauses in 2:5 and 3:1, the same verb almost certainly has its stative rather than its active sense. Jonah 3:3; Zechariah 3:2–3; and Judges 8:11 have similar structures.

Indeed, no ancient or modern versions understand the verb in the sense of “had become.” It would be most unusual for an author to introduce his story with a pluperfect.

### **The Initial Chaos Theory**

The initial chaos view of cosmogony interprets Genesis 1:1 as a declaration that God created the original mass called heaven and earth out of nothing, and verse 2 as a clarification that when it came from the Creator’s hand, the mass was unformed and unfilled.

Looked at grammatically, verse 1 is construed as an independent clause and verse 2 as three circumstantial clauses describing the condition of the earth when it first came into existence. Calvin wrote, “For Moses simply intends to assert that the world was not perfected at its commencement, in the manner in which it is now seen, than that it was created an empty chaos of heaven and earth.” Some who hold this view regard verses 1 and 2 as a chronological unity separated by a gap in time from the first day of creation described in verse 3, whereas most think of verses 1–5 as a chronological unity.

### **Support**

This is the traditional view, and according to Gerhard Hasel it has the support of the majority of Jewish and Christian interpreters. Although this view is still supported in modern times, its number of adherents is diminishing. Moreover, the classic grammar by Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley construed verse 2 as a circumstantial clause with verse 1. Also, this conception of the cosmogony is satisfying to the strictly monotheistic view of the universe.

The view affirms that God existed before all and then He created matter with its potential for life. Luther wrote the following on this view:

The plain and simple meaning of what Moses (here) says is that all things that exist were created by God and that at the beginning of the first day, God put into it the light so that the light of day was shining and the shapeless heaven and earth could be seen. This was not unlike a shapeless crude seed from which things can be generated and produced.

### **Objections**

The only real argument against this view is that it “places a different value” on the words **the heavens and the earth** than are given to them anywhere else in Scripture, because elsewhere in Scripture the phrase refers to a fully created heavens and earth. But it’s not surprising that we would find an exception to that at the very beginning of the creation.

It is concluded, therefore, that it is possible to take verse 2 as a circumstantial clause on syntactical grounds.

### **Review Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of **formless and empty**? And is that a good thing or bad thing?

[Uninhabitable. Like all of the creation, it was good \(but not suitable for human life yet\).](#)

2. How do we know there is no gap between vv.1 and 2?

[The Hebrew grammar doesn’t allow it.](#)

