THE QUESTION

# Do the bounds God set on the waters mean an ice wall around the earth (Job 26:10)?

*Asked by a THF member on April 19, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 7 numbered quotations · the 16 early Christian passages and 116 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.*

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/do-the-bounds-god-set-on-the-waters-mean-an-ice-wall-around-the-earth

## The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

No. In these early Christian passages, the sea's bounds are its shores and sand, which the waves obey at God's command. The firmament is a different thing: a heaven overhead that divides the waters above from the waters below. None of these passages describes an ice wall around the edge of the earth.

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POINT 1 OF 5

## The sea obeys limits God set for it

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Clement of Rome points to the sea as part of God's ordered creation. It never goes past the boundaries God gave it, because it follows His command. He echoes God's words to the sea in Job 38:11. The stress is on God's command, not on a built wall.

**1** “The vast, immeasurable sea, gathered into various basins by His work, never goes beyond the boundaries set for it, following His command. For He says, “Thus far you shall come, and your waves shall be broken within you.””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 16, page 6** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 2 OF 5

## The sea's boundary is the land's shore

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Clement of Alexandria describes creation being put in order: the ocean is kept from flooding the land, and the sea is fixed as the earth's boundary. A later prayer in the Apostolic Constitutions (4th century) says the raging sea runs back, stopped by the sand at God's command. Both picture the shore as the sea's limit.

**2** “It also brought the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements into harmonious arrangement, so that the whole world might become harmony. It let loose the flowing ocean, and yet kept it from encroaching on the land. The earth, again, which had been in a state of commotion, it established, and fixed the sea as its boundary.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Exhortation to the Heathen* 1 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 5, page 5** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

**3** “But as for the sea itself, who can possibly describe it? It comes with fury from the ocean, yet it runs back again, being stopped by the sand at Your command.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 13, page 5** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

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POINT 3 OF 5

## Genesis keeps the firmament and the seas apart

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Theophilus of Antioch repeats the Genesis account. The firmament, called Heaven, separates the waters above from the waters below. Then, in a separate step, the gathered waters are called Seas. So the firmament and the sea's limits do different jobs.

**4** “And God made the firmament, and separated the waters under the firmament from the waters above the firmament. And God called the firmament Heaven, and God saw that it was good.”

*later in the same passage*

“And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas, and God saw that it was good.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Theophilus of Antioch,** *To Autolycus* 11 (c. 169–183 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›

*THF's updated English*

POINT 4 OF 5

## The firmament is pictured overhead, like a roof

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Theophilus compares the heavens to a roof that God made first of all. Tertullian says God hung the firmament in the middle by dividing the waters, and set the dry land in place by separating them. Nothing in either passage makes the firmament a wall at the earth's edge.

**5** “Therefore the prophet also said that the creation of the heavens happened first of all, like a kind of roof, saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Theophilus of Antioch,** *To Autolycus* 13 (c. 169–183 AD) **Source 2, page 5** Read it in the library ›

*THF's updated English*

**6** “He caused the suspension of the heavenly firmament in the midst by dividing the waters. He accomplished the suspension of the dry land by separating the waters.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Baptism* 3 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 7, page 5** Read it in the library ›

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POINT 5 OF 5

## Novatian ties frost to the firmament overhead

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Novatian does picture a firm, crystal-like heaven, made strong by frost, holding up the water above it. So some early writers did think of a solid heaven. But he places it over all things, as a covering, not as an ice wall around the oceans.

**7**

> "A crystal covering is spread over all things. That is, heaven covers all things. At the command of God it had been made firm into a firmament from the flowing material of the waters, so that the strong hardness that divides the midst of the waters which had before covered the earth might sustain, as if on its back, the weight of the water above it, its strength being established by frost."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Novatian,** *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 8 (c. 240–258 AD)
*THF's updated English*

**Source 11, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**

THE LIMITS

## What these passages don't tell us

- None of these passages explains Job 26:10 itself or says exactly what its boundary is.
- Among the writers quoted here, only Novatian speaks of the firmament as made strong by frost.
- Clement of Rome mentions the ocean that people cannot cross, but these passages do not describe what lies at the earth's far edges.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

## The Sources

The 16 early Christian passages and 116 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–16, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 17–112, in Bible order), then 20 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

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## EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *16 passages from 9 writers*

### **Minucius Felix**, *c. 150–270 AD · source 1*

**1** *Octavius* 13 (on point 2) “attentively at the sea: it is bound by the law of its shore… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Theophilus of Antioch**, *c. 169–183 AD · sources 2–4*

**2** *To Autolycus* 13 **Quote 5, page 3** “And by "earth" he means the ground and foundation. By "the deep" he means the great mass of waters. And he speaks of "darkness" because the heaven that God made… [continues online] **read ›**

**3** *To Autolycus* 11 **Quote 4, page 3** “God said, "Let there be a firmament in the… [continues online] **read ›**

**4** *To Autolycus* 6 (on point 2) deep, and the boundaries of the seas, and the treasuries of snow and hailstorms, gathering the waters into the storehouses of the deep, and the darkness into His treasures, and… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Clement of Alexandria**, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 5–6*

**5** *Exhortation to the Heathen* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “let loose the fluid ocean, and yet has prevented it from encroaching on the land… [continues online] **read ›**

**6** *Stromata* 5.14 (1885 English; on point 2) “right hand round the ocean's bound He stretches… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Tertullian**, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 7–8*

**7** *On Baptism* 3 **Quote 6, page 3** “unorganized, and darkness was over the abyss; and the Spirit of the Lord was hovering over the waters." The first thing, O man, that you have to honor is the… [continues online] **read ›**

**8** *Against Hermogenes* 31 (on point 3) the earth, made then in the beginning, were the darkness and the deep, and the spirit, and the waters. For the deep and the darkness lay beneath the earth. Since… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Hippolytus**, *c. 200–236 AD · sources 9–10*

**9** *Refutation of All Heresies* 11 (on point 3) and second ascension, and the Holy Spirit itself also remained in the way already mentioned, the firmament was set between the supermundane spaces and the world. For Basilides divided existing… [continues online] **read ›**

**10** *Exegetical Fragments* 1 (on point 3) “let it divide the water from the water. And it was so. And God made the firmament. And God divided the water under the firmament from the water above the… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Novatian**, *c. 240–258 AD · sources 11–12*

**11** *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 8 **Quote 7, page 4** “At the command of God it had been made firm into a firmament from the flowing material of the waters, so that the strong hardness that divides the midst of… [continues online] **read ›**

**12** *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 17 (on point 3) at the beginning that there should be light, that heaven should be established, that the waters should be gathered into one place, that the dry land should appear, that fruit… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Apostolic Constitutions**, *c. 250–380 AD · source 13*

**13** *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 3, page 2** “and through Him, in the beginning, You brought the disordered parts into order. You divided the waters from the waters by a firmament, and put in them a spirit of… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Lactantius**, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 14–15*

**14** *Divine Institutes* 10 (on point 3) heaven, by which name we now call it, and to that which was above the world, which was called the firmament. And he gave to heaven its name from the… [continues online] **read ›**

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15 *Divine Institutes* 6 (1885 English) “made the regions, and the uninhabitable boundaries under the heaven… [continues online] **read ›**

### Clement of Rome · *source 16*

16 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “vast unmeasurable sea, gathered together by His working into various basins, never passes beyond the bounds placed around it, but does as He has commanded… [continues online] **read ›**

## THE BIBLE *96 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

17 **Genesis 1:6** Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it divide between water and water.” And it was so. **read ›**

18 **Genesis 1:7** God made the firmament, and God divided between the water that was under the firmament and the water that was above the firmament. **read ›**

19 **Exodus 26:26** And you shall make bars of wood that does not rot: five for the one pillar on the one side of the tabernacle, **read ›**

20 **Exodus 26:27** and five bars for the one pillar on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the back pillar, on the side of the tabernacle toward the west. **read ›**

21 **Exodus 26:28** And let the middle bar, between the pillars, pass through from the one side to the other side. **read ›**

22 **Exodus 36:32** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

23 **Exodus 39:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

24 **Judges 3:23** Then Ehud went out to the porch, went out past those who were posted, shut the doors of the upper room on him, and bolted them. **read ›**

25 **1 Kings 6:34** and in both doors were planks of pine. The one door had two leaves and their pivots, and the second door had two leaves that turned, **read ›**

26 **1 Kings 7:5** All the doorways and the spaces were square and beamed; and from doorway to door three times. (Septuagint 3 Kingdoms 7:42 (1 Kings 7:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

27 **1 Kings 7:10** which was founded with costly great stones, stones of ten cubits and of eight cubits; (Septuagint 3 Kingdoms 7:47 (1 Kings 7:10 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

28 **1 Kings 7:41** two pillars, and the twisted work of the pillars on the tops of the two pillars, and the two networks to cover both the twisted works of the carvings that were on the pillars; (Septuagint 3 Kingdoms 7:27 (1 Kings 7:41 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

29 **1 Kings 7:42** the four hundred pomegranates for both the networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover both the twisted works of the base on both the pillars; (Septuagint 3 Kingdoms 7:28 (1 Kings 7:42 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

30 **2 Chronicles 4:9** He made the court of the priests and the great court, and doors for the court, and their doorways overlaid with bronze. **read ›**

31 **2 Chronicles 4:10** And he set the sea at the corner of the house on the right, facing toward the east. **read ›**

32 **Job 11:9** Or longer than the measure of the earth, or the breadth of the sea? **read ›**

33 **Job 26:8** binding up water in his clouds, and the cloud is not torn beneath it. **read ›**

34 **Job 26:10** He has encircled the face of the water by a command, until the end of light with darkness. **read ›**

35 **Job 37:10** and from the breath of the Mighty One he will give frost; and he steers the water as he wills, **read ›**

36 **Job 38:5** Who set its measures, if you know? Or who stretched a line over it? **read ›**

37 **Job 38:8** And I shut in the sea with gates, when it raged as it came out of its mother’s womb; **read ›**

38 **Job 38:10** and I set boundaries for it, putting bars and gates around it. **read ›**

39 **Job 38:11** And I said to it, ‘This far you shall come, and you shall not go beyond; but within you your waves shall be broken.’ **read ›**

40 **Job 38:16** Have you come to the spring of the sea, and walked in the tracks of the abyss? **read ›**

41 **Job 38:29** Out of whose womb does the ice come? And who has given birth to the frost in the sky, **read ›**

42 **Job 38:30** which comes down like flowing water? Who has made the face of the ungodly cower? **read ›**

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43 **Psalms 33:7** He gathers the waters of the sea as in a wineskin; he lays up the deeps in treasuries. (Septuagint Psalm 32:7 (Psalm 33:7 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

44 **Psalms 74:17** You made all the boundaries of the earth; summer and spring, you made them. (Septuagint Psalm 73:17 (Psalm 74:17 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

45 **Psalms 104:6** The deep is his covering like a garment; the waters will stand upon the mountains. (Septuagint Psalm 103:6 (Psalm 104:6 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

46 **Psalms 104:9** You set a boundary which they will not pass, nor will they return to cover the earth. (Septuagint Psalm 103:9 (Psalm 104:9 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

47 **Psalms 107:16** For he shattered the gates of bronze and crushed the bars of iron. (Septuagint Psalm 106:16 (Psalm 107:16 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

48 **Proverbs 8:27** When he prepared the heaven, I was present with him; and when he marked out his own throne upon the winds, **read ›**

49 **Proverbs 8:28** and when he made strong the clouds above, and when he made secure the springs of the earth under heaven, **read ›**

50 **Proverbs 8:29** and when he made strong the foundations of the earth, **read ›**

51 **Ecclesiastes 1:6** Rising there, the sun goes toward the south and circles toward the north. Round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. **read ›**

52 **Jeremiah 23:2** Therefore thus says the Lord against those who shepherd my people: You have scattered my sheep and driven them out, and you have not cared for them; behold, I will take vengeance on you according to your evil practices. **read ›**

53 **Jeremiah 32:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

54 **Lamentations 1:3** Gimel. Judea has been carried away because of her humiliation and because of the greatness of her slavery; she dwells among the nations, she has found no rest; all her pursuers have overtaken her in the midst of her oppressors. **read ›**

55 **Ezekiel 11:9** And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments among you. **read ›**

56 **Ezekiel 26:8** He shall slay your daughters in the field with the sword, and he shall set a guard against you, and build siege works around, and make a wall of stakes around you, and a ring of weapons, and he shall set his spears against you. **read ›**

57 **Ezekiel 26:10** From the multitude of his horses their dust shall cover you; and at the sound of his horsemen and the wheels of his chariots your walls shall be shaken, when he enters your gates as one entering a city from the plain. **read ›**

58 **Ezekiel 28:25** Thus says the Lord God: I will also gather Israel from the nations among whom they were scattered, and I will be sanctified among them, and before the peoples and the nations; and they shall dwell on their land, which I gave to my slave Jacob; **read ›**

59 **Ezekiel 38:8** After many days he shall be made ready, and at the end of years he shall come, and he shall come into the land brought back from the sword, of those gathered from many nations upon the land of Israel, which had become wholly desolate; and he has come out from the nations, and they shall all dwell in peace. **read ›**

60 **Ezekiel 38:10** Thus says the Lord God: And it shall be in that day that words shall come up into your heart, and you shall think up evil plans, **read ›**

61 **Ezekiel 38:11** and you shall say, “I will go up against a land cast off; I will come upon those who are quiet in their tranquility and who dwell in peace, all who inhabit a land in which there is no wall, nor bars, and they have no doors, **read ›**

62 **Ezekiel 41:6** and the side chambers, side chamber upon side chamber, thirty, three times, twice; and there was a space in the wall of the house at the side chambers all around, so that those who take hold of them may see, so that they do not touch the walls of the house at all. **read ›**

63 **Ezekiel 41:16** And the windows were latticed, with openings for light all around the three stories, so that one could look through; and the house and the parts near it were lined with wood all around, both the floor and from the floor up to the windows; and the windows opened in three folds for looking through. **read ›**

64 **Ezekiel 41:23** And the temple had two doors, and the holy place had two doors, for the two doors that turn: **read ›**

65 **Ezekiel 41:24** two doors for the one, and two doors for the second door. **read ›**

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66 **Jonah 2:5** Water was poured around me, even to my soul; the lowest abyss surrounded me; my head sank (Septuagint Jonah 2:6 (Jonah 2:5 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

67 **Haggai 2:6** For thus says the Lord Almighty: Yet once more I will shake the heaven and the earth, and the sea and the dry land; **read ›**

68 **Wisdom of Solomon 13:15** and making for it a dwelling worthy of it, he sets it in the wall and secures it with iron. **read ›**

69 **Wisdom of Solomon 17:16** And so whoever was there fell down and was kept shut up in the prison without iron bars. **read ›**

70 **Wisdom of Solomon 19:17** And they were struck with blindness also, as those others were at the doors of the righteous man, when, surrounded by yawning darkness, each sought the way through his own doors. **read ›**

71 **Wisdom of Solomon 19:19** For land creatures were changed into water creatures, and swimming creatures moved onto the land. **read ›**

72 **Wisdom of Sirach 14:23** He who peers in through her windows will also listen at her doors; **read ›**

73 **Wisdom of Sirach 21:23** A fool looks into a house from the door, but a well-instructed man will stand outside. **read ›**

74 **Wisdom of Sirach 24:5** Alone I circled the vault of heaven, and I walked in the depth of the abysses. **read ›**

75 **Wisdom of Sirach 28:25** and for your words make a balance and a weight, and for your mouth make a door and a bar. **read ›**

76 **Wisdom of Sirach 39:17** For all things will be sought in their time. By his word the water stood like a heap, and by the utterance of his mouth the reservoirs of waters. **read ›**

77 **Wisdom of Sirach 39:22** His blessing covered like a river, and drenched the dry land like a flood. **read ›**

78 **Wisdom of Sirach 43:1** The pride of the height, a firmament of clarity, the appearance of heaven in a vision of glory. **read ›**

79 **Wisdom of Sirach 43:12** It encircles heaven with a circle of glory; the hands of the Most High have stretched it out. **read ›**

80 **Wisdom of Sirach 43:20** The cold north wind will blow, and ice will freeze from the water; it will settle on every gathering of water, and the water will put it on like a breastplate. **read ›**

81 **Letter of Jeremiah 1:18** And as the courtyards are walled up around one who has wronged a king, as around a man led away to death, so the priests secure their houses with doors and locks and bars, so that they may not be plundered by robbers. **read ›**

82 **1 Enoch 1:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

83 **1 Enoch 17:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

84 **1 Enoch 18:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

85 **1 Enoch 18:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

86 **1 Enoch 18:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

87 **1 Enoch 18:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

88 **1 Enoch 18:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

89 **1 Enoch 22:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

90 **1 Enoch 34:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

91 **1 Enoch 34:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

92 **1 Enoch 35:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

93 **1 Enoch 36:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

94 **1 Enoch 36:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

95 **1 Enoch 41:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

96 **1 Enoch 60:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

97 **1 Enoch 60:21** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

98 **1 Enoch 69:17** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

99 **1 Enoch 69:18** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

100 **1 Enoch 69:19** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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**101** **1 Enoch 69:21** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**102** **1 Enoch 76:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**103** **1 Enoch 76:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**104** **1 Enoch 76:10** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**105** **1 Enoch 76:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**106** **1 Enoch 77:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**107** **1 Enoch 77:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**108** **1 Enoch 89:3** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**109** **1 Enoch 89:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**110** **1 Enoch 89:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**
**111** **Romans 10:5** For Moses writes of the righteousness that is from the law, “The man who does them shall live in them.” **read ›**
**112** **Galatians 1:18** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter, and stayed with him fifteen days. **read ›**

## ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *20 verses, by reference*

*Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.*

**Psalms** 33:3

**Matthew** 10:29 · 15:13 · 16:19 · 21:23

**Mark** 7:13

**Luke** 9:48 · 18:27 · 22:31

**John** 1:3 · 1:14 · 8:23 · 8:32

**Romans** 11:33 · 13:1

**Ephesians** 4:10

**Titus** 3:3

**Hebrews** 4:9

**Revelation** 4:7 · 5:13

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*Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.*

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Do the bounds God set on the waters mean an ice wall around the earth (Job 26:10)?” on April 19, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

**Library only.** This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

**How it was made.** Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY