

The Bible and Science: Are They In Conflict?
Volume 2

Resolving Scientific Difficulties In Scripture

by

Don Stewart

Resolving Scientific Difficulties In Scripture

© 2020 By Don Stewart

Published by EOW (Educating Our World)
www.educatingourworld.com
All rights reserved

English Versions Cited

The various English versions which we cite in this course, apart from the King James Version, all have copyrights. They are listed as follows.

Verses marked ESV are from The Holy Bible English Standard Version™ Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) copyright American Bible Society 1991, 1995.

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible Copyright © 2003 By Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.netbible.com All rights reserved.

GOD'S WORD is a copyrighted work of God's Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Verses marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version 2011, Copyright 1973 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Resolving Scientific Difficulties In Scripture

Introduction

Table of Contents

Question 1	What Are the Limitations of Science? Can It Provide Ultimate Answers?
Question 2	What Are Some Common Misconceptions About How Bible-believing Christians View Scripture and Science?
Question 3	What Are the Issues That All Bible-believing Christians Are in Agreement with Respect to the Bible and Science?
Question 4	What Are the Issues in The Bible and Science Debate Where Christians Have Differences?
Question 5	What Is the Primary Purpose of Scripture? Is It to Teach Us About Science?
Question 6	What Are the Various Ways in Which Christians Interpret Scientific References Found in Scripture?
Question 7	Why Do Some Christians Think the Bible Contains No Useful Scientific Information?
Question 8	Why Do Some Christians Try To “Make the Bible Fit” The Latest Theories of Science (Concordism)
Question 9	Why Do Some Christians Believe That the Bible Makes Mistakes in Areas Of Science? (Limited Inerrancy)
Question 10	Should the Bible Be Consulted to Answer Scientific Questions?
Question 11	Why Do Some Scientific Theories Contradict the Bible?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

- Question 12 Why Did The Church Condemn Galileo For Saying The Earth Was Not The Immovable Center Of The Solar System?
- Question 13 What Impact Did the Huxley/Wilberforce Debate Have on the Way the Bible and Science Were Perceived?
- Question 14 What Happened at The Scopes Trial?
- Question 15 Has Christianity Opposed the Advancement of Science?

Part 2

Dinosaurs

What Does the Bible Have to Say?

- Question 16 What Are Dinosaurs?
- Question 17 According to the Bible, When Were Dinosaurs Created?
- Question 18 What Was the Behemoth? Was It a Dinosaur?
- Question 19 What Was the Leviathan? Was It a Dinosaur?
- Question 20 What Happened to The Dinosaurs?
- Question 21 Is It Possible That Dinosaurs Are Alive Today?

Part 3

Scientific Difficulties in Scripture

- Question 22 Does the Bible Make Unscientific Statements?
- Question 23 Does Scripture Teach That the Sky Is a Solid Dome? (Firmament)

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

- Question 24 Does the Bible Teach That the Earth Is the Center of The Universe? (Geocentrism)
- Question 25 Does the Bible Teach a Flat Earth? (The Earth Has Four Corners)
- Question 26 Does Scripture Teach That the Earth Actually Sits on Pillars?
- Question 27 Why Does the Bible Say That the Moon Is a Light?
- Question 28 Is the Gospel Found in the Stars? (Mazzaroth)
- Question 29 Does the Bible Speak About Cavemen?
- Question 30 Does the Rabbit Chew Its Cud?
- Question 31 Why Did God Restrict the Children of Israel From Eating Certain Foods? (The Dietary Laws)
- Question 32 Did the Sun Actually Stand Still in Joshua's Long Day?
- Question 33 Has A Missing Day in History Been Found Which Confirms Joshua's Long Day?
- Question 34 Does the Bible Give an Inaccurate Value to Pi?
- Question 35 How Could Iron Float and Wood Sink?
- Question 36 Did God Back Up the Sun for Hezekiah's Sundial?
- Question 37 Was Jonah Swallowed by A Whale?
- Question 38 Does the Bible Speak of Mythical Creatures Such as the Unicorn?
- Question 39 What Was the Star of Bethlehem?
- Question 40 Does the Bible Foresee Modern Scientific Discoveries?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Question 41 What Should We Conclude About the Bible and Its Views
on Science?

**The Next Book In Our Series: In The Beginning:
The Creation And The Fall**

About the Author

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Introduction

The first volume in our series on the Bible, and its relationship to matters of science, *God's Design or Blind Chance: Biblical Creationism or Atheistic Evolution* looked at the biblical account of creation and contrasted it to the atheistic account of evolution. We also emphasized the necessity of going to the one source that has the ultimate answers to these questions about origins—the Bible.

We now arrive at the second book in our series *Resolving Scientific Difficulties In Scripture*. This volume begins by looking at a number of specific questions with respect to the Bible and its relationship to science.

We will examine what science can and cannot do, the relationship of the Bible to science, the way in which scientific statements should be understood.

Once we have this understanding, we will then examine some of the passages in Scripture, regarding science and nature, that have caused difficulties. We will demonstrate that these scientific difficulties all have a resolution that is not unscientific.

We trust that this volume will the reader gain an understanding concerning the proper relationship of the Bible to science.

Question 1

What Are the Limitations of Science? Can It Provide Ultimate Answers?

Why did life on earth begin? Why are we here on this planet? What is our purpose for existence? Is there an Intelligence who designed the universe, or is everything the result of chance? If an Intelligence did create the universe who is this personage? Can science help answer these questions?

Science Is Limited: It Cannot Answer Many Crucial Questions

Unfortunately, science can never really answer the above questions. It can only describe our universe and the way in which it regularly operates. Science, as we shall see, is limited in what it can tell us. The following points need to be made about the limitations of science.

1. Scientists Cannot Directly Observe The Past

One limitation of science is that it cannot directly observe the past. Scientists study the earth as it exists today. Scientists who make observations through a microscope or a telescope record our universe as it presently stands. Science can gather evidence about the past, but it cannot prove what happened. This is because science relies on repeatable verification.

The scientific method requires multiple, direct or indirect observations of repeatable events. The scientist in the laboratory does their experiment today and expects to be able to do it again tomorrow with the same results.

Since any conclusion regarding past events or circumstances cannot be made as a result of direct observation or experimentation, it places them outside the realm of “scientific proof.”

2. There Are Certain Things Beyond Scientific Inquiry

Since no human being can directly observe the past, no question about our origins can be answered scientifically because first origin questions involve events that are forever in the past. The very beginnings of the universe, and

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

of life on earth, cannot be repeated. Neither was there any human being alive to observe and record them.

Hence, questions about the origin of life and the universe are unable to be considered by the scientific method of experimentation and repetition. Therefore, any conclusion made on these subjects is ultimately based upon faith not upon scientific proof.

3. There Is A Difference Between Operational And Origin Science

Sometimes people confuse “experimental science,” or “operational science,” things that can be tested and repeated, with “origin science”—things which can neither be repeated nor tested. Since this is a common mistake it is important that we understand the distinction.

“Origin science” or “historical science” is concerned with things that are neither testable nor repeatable—the beginning of the universe. Since the beginning of the universe has already taken place, and can never be repeated, there is no scientific test can give us the answer as to what exactly happened. Indeed, we cannot reproduce our beginnings.

Therefore, we must make the distinction between experimental science, which gives reproducible results in the present, and “historical,” or “origin” science, which attempts to make educated inferences about what may have happened once in an unseen past.

Unfortunately, experimental or operational science is often confused with origin or historical science. We must be careful not to do this.

4. Scientists Also Exercise Faith

This brings us to our next point—scientists exercise faith. Though the perception is often given that the evolutionary scientist deals with facts while the person who trusts the Bible operates solely on faith, this is not the case. The unbelieving scientist is just as much a person of faith as a believing scientist or a theologian when it comes to questions of origin.

In fact, as we have previously mentioned in the first volume of this series, there are only two alternatives which a person has with respect to our

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

origins—to believe in a Creator or to believe that everything happened by blind chance. There are no other choices.

Furthermore, whatever a person assumes about our origins, he or she does so by faith. Indeed, the explanation from both the creationist and evolutionist positions requires a person to exercise faith. This is crucial to understand.

While the theory of evolution is the backbone of modern science, modern unbelieving science is in an uncomfortable position because the theory of chance evolution is an unproved, as well as, an unprovable theory. To the point, belief in the theory of atheistic evolution is basically the same as belief in the biblical account of special creation—both are concepts which are believed to be true but neither, by definition, is capable of objective proof.

Furthermore, those who give a naturalistic explanation to our origins reject any idea of the miraculous. They contend that the mechanism for bringing order out of disorder is blind random chance.

On the other hand, the biblical explanation recognizes that nature is ordered and highly complex. Biblical creationism openly concludes that an intelligent Creator God was responsible for our universe and that miracles were involved in the process.

In either case, each view is based upon faith. There were no human witnesses to our origins, neither can what occurred in the past be repeated in a laboratory.

Therefore, each of these theories is essentially unknowable and unprovable as far as the scientific method is concerned.

Whether one believes life was supernaturally designed by the God of the Bible, or evolved by blind chance, the belief is based upon faith—not repeatable scientific evidence or the testimony of a human observer.

5. Everyone, Including Scientists Have Limited Knowledge

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

One other thing that must be appreciated is our lack, or shortage, of knowledge about the universe in which we live. Indeed, human beings have only gathered a tiny fraction of the knowledge that is possible for us to know. In other words, we know hardly anything in comparison to all the facts that are out there.

To make matters worse, our understanding of this limited knowledge is itself limited.

Therefore, we have a limited understand of limited facts concerning the truths of our universe. All of our assumptions are based upon incomplete knowledge. This certainly does not inspire great confidence in any conclusions that human beings may come to.

6. Scientific Theories Constantly Change

It should also be appreciated that the history of science consists of one new theory after another. Sometimes theories are abandoned entirely. Other theories have been changed so often that they lose their original identity. They become like the proverbial pair of pants that ended up more patch than pants.

There are times that a theory seems so factual that it is unchallenged for generations only to be later overturned by the uncovering of new facts. Thus, a scientific hypothesis, theory, or law, is not in the same realm as absolute truth.

Dr. Edward Teller, father of the hydrogen bomb, described the progress of science since the Second World War in the following way:

Practically everything that for years we believed to be true has been proven false or incorrect by subsequent discovery. In fact, there is only one statement that I would now dare to make positively: There is absolutely nothing faster than the speed of light—maybe (Readers Digest, September 1970, p. 20).

This statement certainly speaks for itself!

7. Scientific Statements Must Be Challenged

It is important that statements made “in the name of science” should be challenged. Yet this does not often happen. In fact, over and over again we read and hear such phrases such as “scientists have proved that such and such happened” or “science has shown this to be true.”

The way these phrases are stated seemingly prevents them from being criticized. Indeed, if a person can begin a discussion with the phrase “science has shown” or “science has proved that” then basically they can say almost anything and get away with it.

However, no scientific statement is indisputable, and no theory should be regarded as final. Yet we often find scientific theories stated as though they are “fact” and that there should be no further discussion on the issue. This is not the way we should address this issue.

8. Scientists Are Not Always Objective

There is also the matter that scientists are human beings. The usual picture of a scientist is a person who is open-minded, willing to explore all areas and to study all the data.

It is important to understand that there are some scientists who are not always detached, dispassionate observers. These scientists are not very quick to abandon their own particular theory even though they may find contradictory evidence. Only if all efforts fail and additional facts, incompatible with the accepted theory are uncovered, will they begin to consider other explanations. Scientists, like the rest of us, are sinful fallible human beings. This must always be remembered.

9. Some Scientists Admit Their Prejudice

Some scientists have even admitted that they wanted to get rid of the idea of God as Creator.

Aldous Huxley, one of the early advocates of the theory of evolution, wrote about his prejudices:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for that assumption. . . . The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics, he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. . . . For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that in some way they embodied the meaning (a Christian meaning, they insisted) of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt; we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever (Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937, pp. 312, 315, 316).

Therefore, the theory of mindless evolution is not always believed because people are convinced that it has the better evidence to support it. Rather it is often accepted as true because people do not want to believe in God's special creation and thus be responsible to the Creator for their behavior.

In fact, when speaking of human behavior, the Bible says that people love the darkness rather than the light.

We read the following words of Jesus recorded in John's gospel:

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed (John 3:19-20 ESV).

We must always remember this—our motives are not always what we think they may be.

10. The Majority Of Scientists Can Be Wrong

Because the majority of scientists believe something does not make that belief true. The majority can be wrong. For example, the majority of people reject the Bible as God's Word, but they are wrong.

In fact, Jesus emphasized that the majority of people would be lost. Jesus said:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:13,14 NIV).

Therefore, we must be careful not to necessarily accept as true what the "majority of scientists" might say upon a particular subject. This is especially the case when it deals with areas that the Bible speaks about—the supernatural creation of our universe.

11. Science Cannot Give Ultimate Answers

We cannot, therefore, look to science to provide us with any ultimate answers about our origin, purpose, or destiny. Indeed, the purpose of science is to describe the universe in which we live but science can do no more than describe.

Science can help us answer questions about *what* exists in our universe, but it cannot answer questions of *why* they exist or *how* they came into existence. It is the job of science to observe the natural world and seek to understand it through that observation.

Science can often say, "This happens," or "This is how such-and-such happens," but it is usually outside scientific jurisdiction to say, "This is why such-and-such happens." Unfortunately, scientists often overstep their domain and attempt to deliver declarations on subjects with which science, by definition, is unable to deal.

While science may unravel some of the mysteries of physical life it cannot address the question of right or wrong. The same science that can unlock

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

the power of the atom cannot help us choose between good or evil ways of using that power.

Therefore, terms such as good and evil, right and wrong, meaning and purpose, do not belong to the vocabulary of science. Ultimate answers must come from some other source.

Fortunately, we have that source—the Bible, the Word of the living God.

Summary To Question 1

What Are The Limitations Of Science?

Can It Provide Ultimate Answers?

The discipline of science attempts to give us knowledge of our universe and how it operates. Yet, it is limited in what it can tell us. It is important that we understand this.

For example, science can only observe our world in its present state—it cannot examine the events of the past. Since past events cannot be repeated or tested experimentally, any theory about what has happened is a faith assumption.

This illustrates the difference between what we call “origin science” and “experimental science.” In experimental science, a theory is verified by continual testing. Indeed, the same tests are repeated over and over again by scientists worldwide. This is the scientific method.

However, origin science deals with non-repeatable events—such as the beginning of our universe. By definition, this was a once-and-for all occurrence.

Consequently, there is no test or experiment which we can perform which will determine exactly what originally took place. Instead, one must look at the evidence that we do have and attempt to construct some plausible theory based upon the facts.

Yet, at best, it will only be a theory since no human being was there to record what took place. Ultimately, any theory or hypothesis which is constructed will be done on the basis of faith.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Therefore, scientists, when looking at questions of origins, are like the rest of us—they have to exercise faith.

Consequently, those people who believe that chance evolution is the explanation as to the origin and development of life do this on the basis of faith—not on indisputable repeatable scientific evidence.

There is something else which should be appreciated. Our knowledge of the universe is so limited, and our understanding of that knowledge is even less. Hence, no single person is in a place where they can make unchallenged statements about the universe. None of us has the ultimate answer! Indeed, we are all learning.

Moreover, not all scientists have been objective in their dealing with the evidence. This should make us cautious about accepting a scientific conclusion too readily. Scientists are just as human as the rest of us.

Furthermore, some scientists have admitted their prejudices. It is not that they cannot believe in the Creator/God of the Bible but rather they are unwilling to believe. They do not want to be answerable to Him!

In addition, we must remember that it is possible for the majority of scientists to be wrong about a particular matter. This has certainly been true in the past. Because of its limitations, and the fact that scientific theories continually change, science cannot provide the last word on any matter.

Finally, we must appreciate the fact that science is of no help in answering our ultimate concerns. It is beyond the realm of science to give decisive answers about who we are as human beings and the purpose, if any, which we have here upon the earth.

Fortunately, we are not in darkness when it comes to answering these ultimate questions. The Creator Himself has revealed the answers to these questions to humankind. They are found in the pages of the Bible.

Question 2

What Are Some Common Misconceptions About How Bible-believing Christians View Scripture and Science?

How do Christians view matters of the Bible and its relationship to science? Are they all in agreement with every question which pertains to these issues? Do they speak with one voice? If not, should they all be in agreement on every issue?

There are a number of common misconceptions which people have concerning the subject of the Bible and science as it pertains to the viewpoint of Bible-believing Christians. They can be listed as follows.

Misconception 1: Christians Always Provide Solid Scientific Arguments In The Bible/Science Debate

While Christians believe that God is the Creator of the universe and that He has left behind evidence of His creative work, this does not mean that every so-called scientific argument put forward by Christians somehow establishes this fact.

On too many occasions, well-meaning Christians have put forward poor scientific arguments, or have assembled incomplete data, and then have come up with unwarranted conclusions.

Sadly, this has caused ridicule among both believers and unbelievers. Tragically, this is still happening.

We must understand that some of the technical scientific arguments which were put forward in the past have been refuted by further knowledge.

Therefore, we cannot stress enough that *no* scientific explanation, whether from a believer or a non-believer, should be considered as the last word on any matter. Consequently, we must be careful in citing certain scientific conclusions to prove our case.

Misconception 2: Responsible Christians Hold On

To Their Point Of View On Certain Scientific Matters Even When The Evidence Contradicts It

This brings us to our next point. It is often thought that Christians never refine their explanations about how certain things happened in the past. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Indeed, Christians, more than anyone, want to know the details of the universe which God created. Informed Christians will attempt to explain their scientific conclusions in a balanced way. They will not claim that this is the only possible interpretation of the data. When further information comes to light, they will change their previous positions. This is what science is all about. We will give a couple of illustrations of how responsible Christians have changed their positions when further evidence has come to light.

Was The Creature A Plesiosaur Or a Basking Shark?

One example would be the initial identification of a carcass brought onto board a Japanese ship, the Zuiyo-maru, on April 25, 1977. Initially, this creature was identified as a plesiosaur—an extinct dinosaur. This find led to a number of creationists claiming that it was evidence against naturalistic evolution. These creatures had supposedly been extinct for millions of years, yet we find them still existing in our day and age. The argument was thus made that if the theory of evolution was wrong about this, then it could be wrong about many other things.

Further study now seems to indicate that the creature was not a plesiosaur but rather a type of shark known as a “basking shark.” Most creationists who had previously argued for the identification with the plesiosaur have now accepted the idea that this was indeed the carcass of a basking shark. They realized that this creature had been misidentified and hence they no longer argue that we have a modern-day example of a living dinosaur. This is the responsible way to approach this issue.

Were Human Footprints Found Alongside Dinosaur Footprints?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Another example of how responsible creationists do change their mind when further evidence is available concerns the supposed discovery of human footprints alongside dinosaur footprints.

In the Paluxy River in Glen Rose Texas, dinosaur footprints have been discovered. Of this, there is no doubt. Other footprints were also found which had been identified as human. If this is the case, then it shows that humans lived at the same time as dinosaurs.

This discovery, if true, would contradict the evolutionary idea that dinosaurs died out about 65 million years before humans came on the scene. Consequently, a number of creationist publications highlighted this discovery as a refutation of gradual evolution.

However, further research cast doubt upon the accuracy of the footprints which were attributed to humans. In fact, the evidence is anything but clear.

This led responsible creationists to withdraw their books, and in one case a feature film, which highlighted the findings at Glen Rose. They admitted the evidence for human footprints was just not there—there are too many questions about these footprints to make the identification of them with human beings.

The point is that responsible Christians do admit that they have, at times, misinterpreted the data. Consequently, they revise their interpretation. This does not imply that creationists are wrong about everything or that the theory of evolution is true. It only says that in certain instances creationists may have misread the evidence and have had to change their opinion.

This again illustrates the necessity of applying caution to any so-called fact or discovery which we think will refute the claims of evolution. Many of the latest “scientific finds” soon become “scientific nonsense.”

Misconception 3: All Creationists Are Christians And All Evolutionists Are Unbelievers

Contrary to what is often thought, not every individual who believes in creationism is a Christian. Furthermore, not everyone who believes in evolution is a non-Christian.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Indeed, there are many creationists in religions other than Christianity. Muslims, for example, believe that Allah created the universe in six days. They do not accept the theory of evolution, but they are certainly not Christians.

Many Jews believe the biblical account of creation and reject atheistic evolution. Yet, they do not place their faith in Jesus Christ. Many other religions have their creation stories, yet they too reject Jesus Christ as the one way to reach the one God. In addition, others accept creationism without specifying any belief in a particular God or religion.

This means that we have to do more than convince someone to be a creationist. Indeed, a person could come to the conclusion that the idea of a Creator is more consistent with the evidence than believing that everything happened by blind chance. However, this does not make that person a Christian.

Indeed, believing in some form of creationism, even the biblical form, does not make someone a Christian. To become a Christian, a person must personally believe in Jesus Christ—not merely creationism.

There Are Christian Evolutionists

Unhappily, a large number of Christians accept some form of Darwinian evolution as a fact. They do not believe that this conflicts with their Christian faith. While their position is contrary to what the Bible teaches on the subject, it ultimately has nothing to do with their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. For whatever reason, they accept Darwinism as the best explanation of how things exist in their present state. Yet they also believe that the God of the Bible ordered it this way.

To sum up, they do not think that the Bible commits us one way or the other on the issue of creation and evolution.

However, this position is tragic. Those who hold this position have either not seen the evidence from Scripture, have not had it properly explained to them, or simply assume that the statements about creation were not meant to be understood literally.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

In these cases, it is important to explain to them what the Bible clearly teaches on the subject and the implications of rejecting the biblical teaching.

Conclusion: We Need To Understand These Misconceptions

Unfortunately, these misconceptions about Christianity and science remain with us. It is important that we do not hold onto to any of them. Our responsibility should be to correctly understand and present what the Bible actually says, as well as what Christianity stands for, in a fair and objective manner.

Let us not make these same mistakes which so many people have made, and continue to make, about the Bible and science.

Summary To Question 2

What Are Some Common Misconceptions About How Bible-believing Christians View Scripture And Science?

There are a number of common misconceptions, which are held by both Christians and non-Christians alike, concerning the ways in which Christians regard matters of the Bible and science. These misconceptions need to be cleared up.

There is the misconception that assumes that all Christian publications, as well as those who teach the Bible and science, at all times present solid scientific evidence in favor of creationism.

Unfortunately, this is not always true. Too often, books are published which contain either outdated or refuted information in matters of science. This gives the perception that the creationist is not working with solid scientific evidence. Such is not the case. The fact that some people have irresponsibly given faulty scientific evidence in favor of creationism does not mean that all Christians do this. A bad argument from certain people does not mean that everyone presents bad arguments. Unhappily, the case for creationism is often perceived in this manner.

It is also wrong to assert that Christians do not modify their views when further evidence becomes available. They do. There was the

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

misidentification of a certain creature as a plesiosaur—an extinct dinosaur. Most Christian scientists do not argue for this any longer.

The identification of human footprints alongside dinosaur footprints in Texas is another example of some Christians proclaiming a “find” before all of the evidence is in. These arguments are no longer used by responsible spokesmen for creationism because the evidence is just not there.

Finally, and most important, it is not true that all creationists are Christians and that all evolutionists are non-Christians. There are a number of people who are creationists who either embrace a religion different from Christianity or no religion at all. Thus, believing in some type of special creation does not make one a Christian.

On the other hand, there are a number of Bible-believing Christians, who, though inconsistent with Scripture, accept some form of the theory of evolution.

One, therefore, cannot assume that all believers in Jesus Christ are creationists or that all creationists are Bible-believing Christians. It is not that simple.

It is tragic that many Christians hold to some form of Darwinian evolution—seeing that it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture. In these cases, it is important to inform the believer what the Bible teaches on the subject as well as the implications of holding a view that is different from what the Bible says.

God’s Word, not the latest results of certain unbelieving scientists, should be our guide. Indeed, the Bible is our only infallible guide on these issues.

These are some of the common misconceptions in the Bible/science debate. They need to be refuted. This is the honorable thing to do.

Question 3

What Are the Issues That All Bible-Believing Christians Are in Agreement with Respect to the Bible and Science?

When it comes to issues regarding the Bible and science, Christians find themselves in a great deal of agreement. Indeed, there are a number of things which all Bible-believing Christians can see eye-to-eye in the areas of science and Scripture.

Therefore, we can list the following truths as being plainly taught in the Scripture.

1. The God Of The Bible Created All Things

Scripture is clear that the God of the Bible is the Creator of all things. There is no doubt about this. The very first verse of Scripture introduces us to God and His creative ability. The remainder of Scripture echoes this truth. The God of the Bible is the Creator of the universe. Of this, there is no doubt.

In the ancient world, the question was not whether there was a Creator but rather the identity of this Creator. Which God, or gods, was responsible for creating our world? The Bible clearly answers this question—it is the God revealed in the Bible.

2. The God Of The Bible Is Only One God Exists

Bible-believing Christians also agree that the God of Scripture is the only God who exists. Again, we find that from the first page of Scripture until the last, the Bible makes it clear that the God who it reveals is the only One who exists. There are no other gods either stronger or weaker than Him. The Lord alone is God—there is none like Him.

3. The Universe Exists Separately From God

We also discover that the Scriptures clearly teach that God is not the same as the universe—He has separate existence from it. In the beginning, there

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

was God and Him alone. At a certain point in time, God created the material universe. Before He created the universe God Himself existed. The universe, therefore, is not part of God and God does not need the universe to exist.

This is in contrast to other beliefs that were held in the ancient world. Pagan nations saw the universe as something which existed eternally alongside the gods. The Bible presents an entirely different picture of God and the universe.

4. God Created Everything By Himself: He Did Not Have Help

The Bible also makes it plain that everything in the universe was created by the God of Scripture and by Him alone. He did not have any help. Indeed, He did not need any help.

God did not consult anyone—for there was nobody to consult. He alone is responsible for the creation of the universe. This is one of the main points of the creation narrative in Genesis and this same truth is emphasized throughout Scripture. God alone exists and God alone creates.

5. God Created Everything With No Human Observer Present

The biblical account of creation states that God created everything that there is. When He created the world, there was no human being present. In fact, humans did not come about until the very end of the creative process. This means that any information about what occurred during God's creative work must come from Him and Him alone since there were no human observers. Thus, we have to rely upon His testimony to discover what happened.

6. God Created Human Beings As The Crown Of His Creation

Another point of emphasis in the Bible is that humans were the very last thing which God created. Everything else preceded the creation of the human race. After God created the first two humans, Adam and Eve, He ceased creating. Today, God is sustaining His marvelous creation.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

These are some of the starting points about the Bible and science which all Bible-believing Christians can agree. God has told us these things in His Holy Word. Since He is a God of truth—One who does not lie—we can be assured that whatever He tells us on any subject is the truth. This includes what He has revealed about His creative works and how He presently runs the universe.

Summary To Question 3

What Are the Issues That All Bible-believing Christians are in Agreement With Respect To The Bible And Science?

With respect to the issue of Scripture and science there are a number of points in which all Bible-believers can agree with. It is necessary that we understand exactly what they are.

For one thing, all Christians can agree that the God of the Bible is the Creator of all things. This is the consistent testimony of the Bible.

Furthermore, He is the only God who exists. There are no other gods either greater or lesser than He. He alone is God—there is no one like Him anywhere in the universe. In other words, He has no competitors.

We also know that when the God of Scripture created everything there was nobody around to help Him. He did everything by Himself. God spoke and the universe came into existence.

Furthermore, when God created the universe, He brought something into being which did not previously exist. Therefore, God exists separately from the universe. He is not part of the universe neither was the universe created from part of His body. This is in contrast to the views of creation which were popular at the time the biblical account was written.

Since nobody was with God when He created the universe, any testimony as to what occurred must come from Him and Him alone. Only God can give us the proper explanation as to what happened in the beginning.

Finally, Scripture says that humans were the last of God's creation. We were the high point of His creative acts. After God created Adam and Eve,

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

the first humans, He ceased creating. Today He is sustaining the universe which He has created.

These truths are clearly taught in the Scripture. Since God does not lie, we can accept these facts as a framework concerning subjects pertaining to the Bible and science. This is our starting point.

Question 4

What Are the Issues in The Bible and Science Debate Where Christians Have Differences?

While there are many things which Christians have in common with respect to the Bible and science as well as the creation account recorded in the Book of Genesis, there are a number of well-known issues where Christians disagree among themselves.

While Christians all agree that God is the Creator and the Book of Genesis records certain things about His creative work, with respect to the details of creation there is anything but complete agreement. While it is important to realize what Christians can agree upon, it is also important to know where there are legitimate differences.

A Crucial Point: Bible-Believing Christians Want To Know The Truth About Creation

Before we look at some areas in which Christians disagree among themselves with respect to the Bible and science, there is one area which all believers should be in agreement—we all want to know the truth about these issues.

In other words, the differences that people have with respect to these matters have nothing to do with one group wanting to know the truth of Scripture while the other group does not. Indeed, Bible-believers are interested in knowing what Scripture says on these matters.

There is something else we must note. In this quest, we should not assume one group is somehow intellectually or morally deficient while the others are of higher intelligence and moral integrity.

Indeed, two spirit-filled godly people may hold contrasting views to one another on these subjects. The issue is not decided upon who has the greater moral, spiritual, or intellectual qualities.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

While it is not possible for each side to be correct on these issues, we should not assume that those who hold a differing position than us have a lesser view of God or of the Scripture.

Unhappily, too often when these matters are discussed one side accuses the other of having a low view of Scripture or being intellectually challenged. This is not the way Christians should behave!

Areas Of Differences Among Bible-Believers

The following are some of the areas in which Bible-believing Christians disagree among themselves concerning the subject of the Bible and science.

How Christians Should Approach The Areas Of The Bible And Science

To begin with, there is no agreement among Bible-believing Christians as to how Christians should approach the issues relating to the Bible and science. All Christians would agree that the main point of Scripture is not to teach us about science. However, Christians disagree among themselves as to whether the Bible has anything authoritative to say on the subject.

Some Christians think the Bible has much to teach us about science and nature while other believers think Scripture has little if anything to say on the subject. While all agree that Scripture is attempting to teach us theological or spiritual truths about God and humanity there is disagreement as to what the scientific statements found in Scripture are attempting to teach us.

The Length Of The Days In Genesis 1

Probably the issue which generates the most discussion among Christians in the areas of Genesis and science concerns the meaning of the word “day” in Genesis 1. The Bible says that God completed the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days. He then rested, or ceased creating, on the seventh day. As to how Christians understand the meaning of the word “day” in this context is a major source of contention.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Most see the days as six literal twenty-four-hour periods which God created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them. Indeed, this has been the traditional view of the church and until the nineteenth century it was rarely, if ever, disputed. In fact, in our opinion, this is what the Bible clearly teaches on the subject.

Others believe the days were literal but that there were gaps of time, perhaps millions of years, between each of the six literal days of creation.

Still others think that the days were literal but not as days of creation. Rather they are literal days in which God revealed to Moses what happened in the beginning.

There is also the point of view that the days actually represent a longer period of time than twenty-four hours. In other words, they were not literal days of twenty-four hours.

We could add a number of other different perspectives on how the days are to be understood. The point is this: there is no unified answer to this question upon which every Christian agrees.

The Age Of The Earth And The Universe

This issue is related to the question about how we understand the days in Genesis. Most Bible believers understand the days to be actual solar days and the creation of the universe to be something recent.

However, others believe they are solar days but do not necessarily assume that the creation is meant to be understood as something which happened relatively recently.

Those who do not see the days in Genesis as literal days usually hold to the idea that the earth and the universe are old.

Furthermore, it is contended by some that Scripture never specifically informs us about the age of the earth or of the universe. In other words, it is not a subject in which the Bible gives us a clear answer. Therefore, they argue that Christians can have differences concerning this issue since God purposely did not make this matter clear for us.

The Extent Of Noah's Flood

There may be some people surprised that we have put the extent of Noah's Flood as one of the issues where Christians express disagreement. While it is clear that the purpose of the Flood was to destroy all of humanity, it is argued by a number of Bible-believing Christians that it was not necessary to inundate the entire globe to achieve this.

In fact, they contend that if human life and animal life were restricted to one geographic area, then the Flood could have accomplished its purpose without covering the entire globe.

In other words, there are a number of ways in which Bible-believers understand the Genesis Flood.

These are a few of the issues concerning the Bible and science in which there is disagreement among Bible-believers.

Why Are These Issues Debated Among Christians?

Since there are differences of opinion among Bible believers, we need to ask the question as to why. Why is this the case?

There are actually a number of reasons as to why these issues are debated among Bible-believers. They can be listed as follows.

1. Many People Believe That The Bible Does Not Give Precise Information On The Subject

Simply put, many Christians think that there is not enough specific information given to us to be sure of the correct answer on any subject regarding the Bible and science.

Obviously, there are answers to each of these questions. So, the issue is this: Has the Bible given us sufficient information so that we can know the answer?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

We must read the Bible on its own terms and let it give us the answer to this question. If it has given us enough information, then we must accept what it says—no matter what the current scientific theory may be.

2. Some People Refuse To Examine Another Point Of View

Unfortunately, there are some people who hold a particular viewpoint on issues relating to the Bible and science who will not even consider other options than the one they hold.

However, as we have emphasized, this is not the way we should go about deciding what we believe. We need to be intellectually honest and consider all of the evidence.

Since there are a number of issues in which Bible-believing Christians have differences we need to show much charity to those who hold a differing viewpoint than us.

However, at the end of the day, it is the Bible and the Bible alone which much be our guide. We cannot let the latest results from secular science dictate our beliefs. As we have noted, scientific theories change.

We have dealt with these issues in detail in volume five of our series *The Days of Genesis 1, The Age of the Earth, The Extent of the Flood of Noah*.

Summary To Question 4

What Are The Issues In The Bible And Science Debate Where Christians Have Differences?

On Bible/science issues, Bible-believing Christians agree on a number of different matters. For one thing, Christians agree that the God of the Bible is the only God who exists. As the only God, He is the Creator of the universe.

There are many other things about Genesis, the Bible and science, in which there is agreement among Bible-believers. There is no doubt about this fact.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

However, we must appreciate that there are differences which godly people have with one another with respect to Bible/science matters. They include the following.

First, there is the question as to how the subject the Bible and science should be approached. Is the Bible trying to teach us scientific truth or is it not? Some say it is, while others insist it is not.

One of the major issues that continues to divide Christians concerns the understanding of the word “day” in Genesis 1. Are they solar days or long periods of time? Possibly the days are merely symbolic.

If they are literal days, are they days literal days of creation? Could they have been six literal days where God revealed His creative acts to Moses?

Others believe there may have been gaps of time between these literal days of creation—perhaps millions of years. As we can see, there is no agreement as to how to interpret this issue.

The age of the earth and the universe is also unsettled among Bible-believers. Do we live in an old earth or a young earth? Bible-believers differ on this matter. Indeed, they further disagree as to whether the Bible provides us with an answer to this question.

Finally, there is no agreement among Bible-believers as to the extent of Noah’s Flood. Did it cover the entire earth or was it limited to a particular geographic area?

While Christians disagree on these issues it does not mean that there are no answers to these questions.

As we have repeatedly emphasized, these issues must be addressed but they must be addressed with grace and charity toward all. Our fifth volume in this series on the Bible and Science addresses them in detail.

Question 5

What Is The Primary Purpose Of Scripture? Is It To Teach Us About Science?

What is the main purpose of the Bible? Is it to teach scientific truth? If not, then what is the Bible trying to tell us? What is the message of Scripture?

The Main Purpose Of Scripture – God’s Relationship With Humanity

The purpose of Scripture is to call humanity into a relationship with the living God. This is the message of Scripture—God exists, and human beings can have a personal relationship with Him!

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus prayed the following to God the Father:

Now this is eternal life—that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent (John 17:3 NET).

In this instance, Jesus defines “eternal life.” It consists of knowing the true God through Himself. This is wonderful news—human beings can know God!

Indeed, we can have a personal relationship with Him. This relationship, which begins the moment a person believes in Christ, never ends.

The Apostle Paul said that his goal was to know Jesus Christ. He said:

All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life (Philippians 3:10 CEV).

Paul wanted to know Jesus—he wanted to deepen his relationship toward God the Son.

Therefore, the main idea behind Scripture concerns the relationship of humanity with God. This is what the Bible is all about.

What Divine Revelation Tells Us About Ourselves And God

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Divine revelation also reveals God's purpose for humankind. In fact, only by divine revelation can we know who we are, as well as what is the meaning of our existence. It informs us of the following:

1. Humans Were Created In God's Image: Everything Was Perfect

Humankind was created in the image of an infinite personal God. We read in Genesis about this original creation:

Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals." So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26,27 NLT).

From Scripture, we find that human beings are different from the animals. We alone have been made in the image of God.

Furthermore, the Bible says that when God finished His creation of all things, including humans, everything was perfect. The Bible says:

And God saw everything that he had made and that it was very good. There was evening, then morning—the sixth day (Genesis 1:31 God's Word).

Perfection was everywhere.

2. Perfection Lost: The First Humans Sinned

This perfection was shattered when Adam and Eve, the first humans, sinned. They disobeyed the one negative commandment which God gave to them. This caused them to become separated from God. We read about this in the third chapter of Genesis (Genesis 3:1-24).

3. God Became A Human To Bridge The Gap

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Next, the Bible tells us God became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ and bridged the gap between Himself and humanity by His death on the cross. Paul wrote:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT).

Humanity can now approach God because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. No longer do we need to be separated from Him.

4. Each Of Us Is Responsible To Make A Decision

Finally, we discover that each individual is responsible before God and must personally receive Jesus Christ as his or her Savior. The Bible says:

For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23 NET).

Without divine revelation, we would not know any of these things. It is our only basis of speaking meaningfully about God.

5. The Teaching Of Science Is Not The Main Purpose Of Scripture

The Bible claims to be the final authority on all matters of belief and practice. Whenever the Bible speaks, it speaks authoritatively.

As we have just emphasized, the main purpose of Scripture is to explain who God is, who we are, and what God requires of us. The Bible is the story of a Creator/God who made the world as well as the human race. It tells us of the original perfect creation, the Fall of Humanity which separated us from God, and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary to unite God and humanity. Everything recorded in Scripture is for the purpose of telling this story.

Therefore, whenever we encounter references to science and nature these references are always incidental to the main story. Indeed, in the Book of

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Genesis, only two chapters contain the creation account and the placing of the first humans in paradise.

Furthermore, the great events in our past, the Creation, the Fall, Flood, and the Tower of Babel are contained in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

However, the great majority of the Book of Genesis deals with God's relationship with one man—Abraham—and his family. This is where Scripture places its emphasis.

Thus, while whatever the Bible teaches on any subject is certainly true, the emphasis in Scripture is not on teaching scientific truth. Instead the emphasis is on the God of the Bible and His relationship to the human race. This is the message of Scripture.

Summary To Question 5

What Is The Primary Purpose Of Scripture? Is It To Teach Us About Science?

It is important that when we read any book, we discover its main purpose. In other words, what is the author trying to tell us? Since the Bible is the Word of the living God, it is essential to discover what this divine revelation is saying.

From a reading of the Bible we find that the main purpose of Scripture is to bring people into a relationship with the One God through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, all of Scripture centers on God and His program for humanity. The good news of Scripture is that salvation from sin is available from God. When we trust Christ as our Savior, we begin an eternal relationship with Him. This is what the message of the Bible is all about.

Therefore, we should not understand that the purpose of the Bible is mainly to teach us truth about science or any other matter. The Bible is chiefly interested in explaining who God is, who we are, and how we can have a relationship with Him.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

However, this does not mean that Scripture may not have other purposes. It does. Thus, whenever we find references from God to science and nature, they will accurately reflect the truth. He will provide for us some insights into the world which He has created. In other words, God will not tell us anything untrue about the universe around us.

Yet we must always remember the emphasis of Scripture is on God and His program for humanity. The references to science and nature are only incidental to the main story.

Consequently, we may not discover answers to all of our questions on the Bible and science because God has not revealed them. Indeed, it was not His purpose to do so.

It is vital that we understand this truth while investigating the issues of the Bible and science.

In sum, the scientific references are accurate, but they are not the main story.

Question 6

What Are the Various Ways In Which Christians Interpret Scientific References Found In Scripture?

The main purpose of Scripture is to inform humans of who God is, who we are, and how we can have a right relationship with Him. There is no doubt about this. All other subjects are of a secondary interest to the writers of Scripture. This includes issues pertaining to science and nature.

The Bible, The Word Of God, Contains Many References To Science And Nature

The Bible is our final authority on all matters of belief and practice. Indeed, we go to it, and to it alone, for the last or ultimate Word on every issue in which it speaks about.

In Scripture, we find a number of references to God creating the heaven and the earth. In fact, over fifty times we find the Bible referring to God's creation of all things.

The Question: What Is God's Intention In Providing Scientific References In Scripture?

We now come to the issue of the intent. Did God, through the biblical writers, intend to teach us certain truths about the nature of the universe?

In other words, are the scientific references there to teach us specific things we would not otherwise know, or are they given to serve another purpose? How are we to interpret references in Scripture to science and nature?

How Christians Interpret These References (Four Options)

Christians are divided over this issue. In fact, there are at least four different ways in which they answer this question.

The following viewpoints have been brought forward by Christians to explain how we are to understand the Bible's relationship to science. They can be simply stated as follows.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Option 1: The Bible Does Not Intend To Provide Us With Any Useful Scientific Material (The Religious Only View)

The first option says that the Bible is God's Word to humanity, but it holds that scientific statements found in Scripture are *not* meant to teach us anything that we would not otherwise know. Instead, the purpose of Scripture is to bring humankind to salvation through belief in Jesus Christ—not to teach us anything special about science or the universe. Hence, the Bible contains no useful scientific material.

Therefore, scientific answers about our world must come from science alone—not the Bible. In other words, the Bible should never be consulted in scientific matters because God never intended it to be used that way.

Option 2: The Information The Bible Gives About Science Is True But It Is Purposely Vague (Make The Bible Fit)

This option also views the Bible as God's Word to humanity. Furthermore, it says that Scripture does intend to give us some information about science. Yet the information is of such a general nature that it can be made to fit current scientific theories such as the theory of evolution.

In other words, there is nothing specifically taught in the Bible with respect to science and nature. Therefore, any scientific conclusions must ultimately come from the results of science alone.

Option 3: The Bible Makes Mistakes In Certain Scientific Statements And Viewpoints (Limited Inerrancy)

This option sees the Bible as God's Word but *only* in regard to theological statements or spiritual issues. The only infallible statements in Scripture deal with spiritual matters (heaven, hell, salvation, sin, etc.). Statements of a scientific, or historical nature, on the other hand, are not necessarily mistake-free.

Consequently, since the Bible is not attempting to teach anything about the nature of the universe it is possible, even likely, that the biblical writers

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

made mistakes when they made statements about science and nature. However, this does not affect the truthfulness of the main message.

**Option 4: The Bible Speaks Correctly And Sometimes
Specifically, On Matters Of Science And Nature (All
References Are To Be Taken Seriously)**

This final option says that the Bible is God's Word to humanity and the statements about science and nature are to be understood at face value. Though not a textbook on science, when God is speaking, either directly or indirectly through His spokesmen, the Bible always correctly states matters that deal with the universe in which we live. Consequently, He does provide us with truth which we would not otherwise know.

Therefore, the biblical statements about science and nature are there to teach us something. And what it teaches us, on many occasions is *specific* truth about science and nature.

Furthermore, these teachings which come from God, or His prophets, are always truthful. Indeed, the Bible says that God cannot lie:

Then they will have the hope of eternal life that God promised long ago. And God never tells a lie! (Titus 1:2 CEV)

To sum up, this viewpoint holds that there are no scientific inaccuracies in the Bible—a Book that comes from the living God.

Evaluation Of These Four Positions

Generally speaking, these are the four different ways in which believers approach the subject of the Bible and its relationship to matters of science. There are Bible-believing Christians who can be found who hold to each of these views.

The "Religious Only View" says that the scientific references in Scripture should not be taken seriously—they were never meant to be understood this way. Others claim that the scientific references are there for a reason, but they are purposely vague. This means that there are no specific truths we can derive from them. Still others assume the biblical writers, while

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

intending to teach scientific truth made mistakes in the area of science and nature.

What these three theories have in common is the viewpoint that we do *not* go to the Bible to find any specific scientific truth. However, none of these theories is satisfactory.

We believe that the statements in Scripture regarding science and nature should be taken seriously. Indeed, the God who created all things has decided to place in His Holy Word certain references to our visible world. They are *not* there by accident.

Indeed, God gives us these references to teach us truths about Himself and the world which He created—these are truths that we would not otherwise know.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we discover what God has told us about these matters and then believe what He tells us.

Summary To Question 6

What Are The Various Ways In Which Christians Interpret Scientific References Found In Scripture?

The Bible contains references to science and nature. Christians are not unified as to how these references should be interpreted. Indeed, there are basically four different ways in which they approach this issue. They include the following:

First, there are some people who think the Bible contains no useful scientific information whatsoever. The purpose of Scripture centers upon our relationship to God—it is not to teach us scientific truth. Therefore, the believer has to look elsewhere for answers to questions of a scientific nature. The Bible should not be consulted.

Others see the Bible containing some teaching with respect to science and nature, but these teachings are so general they can mean just about anything. Therefore, current theories of science can be read back into the Bible because of the general nature of its teaching on these issues.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

A third view sees the biblical writers actually making errors in scientific statements. It is only the theological or spiritual statements which are error-free. God protected His words in the spiritual or theological area but not necessarily in the scientific or historical area. Therefore, we should never look to Scripture for scientific answers for there may be mistaken statements about the universe from the writers of the Bible.

Finally, a fourth position sees the Bible as speaking accurately in the areas of science and nature and providing some specific information. While this is not the main purpose of the Bible, the God of Scripture, who is a God of truth, will never tell us untruths about the universe which He has created. Thus, we can find some useful scientific information in the Bible though this is not the central reason as to why the Scripture was given to us.

There are Christians who embrace each of these four positions. Consequently, there is ongoing discussion among Bible-believers as to how these references to science and nature should be understood.

As we emphasized, we feel that the Bible has given an answer to this question—a very clear answer! The scientific and natural references found in Scripture are given for a purpose—to teach us things we would not otherwise know. Indeed, the God of truth has taught us things about our world, and we need to pay attention to those things.

Question 7

Why Do Some Christians Think The Bible Contains No Useful Scientific Information?

One of the questions which continues to divide Bible-believing Christians concerns the amount of useful scientific material that we can expect to find in the Bible. Simply stated, does the Scripture intend to give us specific information in the areas of science and nature? Or is it the purpose of Scripture to teach only spiritual truth? What is the best answer to this question?

The Theory Explained: It Is Not The Intention of Holy Scripture To Provide any Useful Scientific Information

There are some Bible-believing Christians who believe that biblical references regarding science are not to be understood in such a way as to teach us anything about the nature of the universe.

Indeed, they feel that it is *not* the purpose of Scripture to give its readers any scientific information. These interpreters view Scripture more as a theological statement where any hope of finding scientific information should be abandoned.

The Bible, they say, should not be used to answer scientific questions about the age and historical unfolding of the earth. They maintain that Scripture tells us only that God is the Creator, but it does not tell us “when” or “how” He created. To determine this, we have to go elsewhere for answers.

The Purpose Of Genesis Is To Introduce God To The Readers

The opening chapters of Genesis are given to explain the power and authority of the God of the Bible. It is to let us know that He is the only God who exists.

In addition, it is to inform us that God alone is the Creator. The references to science and nature are given in a framework to teach these truths. Yet they are not what the story is all about and hence they should not be understood literally.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Consequently, any reference to science found in the Bible is not meant to be understood as divine revelation. In other words, these references are not given to teach us previously unknown truths about the universe. Thus, the Scripture offers no useful, and certainly, no definitive scientific material for modern humanity.

Too Many Christians Are Fighting The Wrong Battle

Therefore, this theory holds that many believers are fighting the wrong battle in the Bible/science debate. Indeed, we do not have to defend the Bible in areas which it touches science because this is not the purpose of Scripture.

Consequently, we should not be arguing about such things as the length of the days in Genesis or the age of the earth. The Bible does not address these issues. In fact, when we concentrate on these particular matters, we are missing the main message of Genesis as well as the rest of Scripture.

Response To The Idea The Bible Contains No Useful Scientific Information

While some hold that the Bible contains no useful scientific information for people living in the twenty-first century there are many Christians who outright reject this idea.

Indeed, they claim the Bible does attempt to convey useful scientific information. Those holding this position do so for several reasons. They include the following:

1. Genesis Is Foundational Truth

To begin with, the statements of Scripture that touch the areas of science and nature are written as history. There is no hint in the text that they should be interpreted as non-historical events. From the first page of the Bible until the last, these events are assumed to have literally happened.

Furthermore, the truths taught in Genesis are foundational to the rest of Scripture. If one removes the first three chapters of Genesis from the area of fact, then the rest of the teaching of Scripture is meaningless.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The issue can be stated in this manner: “Upon what basis would someone reject certain truths found in the first three chapters of Genesis but accept others?” “Why should we accept some things as literally true but consider other things symbolic—especially when the text itself does not seem to make this distinction?”

Since the Bible makes no such distinction then neither should we.

2. The People May Not Always Have Understood The Scientific Statements

Often it is argued that the biblical writers, as well as their audience, would not have fully understood a correct, but simple, scientific explanation of the physical world. Supposedly everyone living at that time had a primitive unscientific view of the world.

Thus, instead of taking the time to correct their unscientific thoughts, God, speaking through the writers of Scripture, kept them ignorant.

However, we do not know this for a fact. While we do know that Israel’s neighbors had an unscientific view of the world, we should not necessarily assume that Israel understood the physical world in the same way. We must remember that from the beginning God had revealed Himself to a specific line of people. His revelation of Himself went all the way back to the beginning.

Therefore, should we assume that from the beginning God taught His people truth in spiritual areas but mislead them, or kept them ignorant, in areas such as science and nature? This does not make sense.

While the Lord may not have completely explained the form and function of the universe to the early inhabitants of the earth, He certainly would not have given them false information.

It is also important to note that the biblical writers did not always completely understand what they were recording. Prophetic messages, for example, went beyond the historical understanding of the people. For example, we read the following in the Book of Daniel:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:8,9 ESV).

Scientific statements would inevitably exceed the current state of knowledge. We should not assume that the scientific statements had to have been completely comprehended by the people to whom they were originally given. God’s revelation of Himself was for all time. However, this is something very different than saying that God gave them false information.

Furthermore, if the details of creation are not that important then why are they recorded in Genesis and then restated elsewhere in the Bible? Why spend so much space telling us what happened if it did not occur in the manner in which it is stated?

3. Scripture Seems To Have Given Certain Scientific Truths In Advance

Finally, we seem to have examples of Scripture giving us some scientific truths in advance. Certain of the sanitary procedures set down by the God of the Bible were not understood until thousands of years afterward. Other illustrations are often given to show that the Bible was ahead of its time in areas of science. We look at some of these examples in Question 46.

Though the giving of scientific truth is by no means the main purpose of Scripture, the fact that it is there should cause us to take it seriously. The idea, therefore, that the Bible contains no usable scientific information is incorrect.

Summary To Question 7

Why Do Some Christians Think The Bible Contains No Useful Scientific Information?

Christians do not agree among themselves as to how we should understand references of science and nature that are contained in the Bible. In fact, there are some Bible-believing Christians who think that Scripture contains

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

no useful scientific information whatsoever. All references to science and nature are given to teach theological truth—not scientific fact.

Therefore, Christians should never look to the Bible to answer questions about science for it is not what Scripture is trying to do. Any answers must come from modern science, not the Bible.

Of course, not everyone agrees with this perspective. While it is true that the purpose of Scripture is to teach spiritual truth, it does not necessarily follow that references to science and nature are meaningless. Indeed, since we find these references to creation and nature throughout Scripture, we must take them seriously.

Furthermore, we need not assume that the people had to fully understand all the references which were made about issues of science and nature. God's revelation of Himself in the Scripture is for all people of all times. This includes modern humanity as well as ancient man.

There is one other thing we must note. It seems that the Bible actually gives some examples of scientific understanding years before science caught up to the Scripture. This is a further reason to take these issues seriously.

Therefore, we should not conclude that all of the scientific references in Scripture are somehow without meaning. On the other hand, we must not make the mistake of reading too much into the scientific references in Scripture.

Indeed, we must always remember that they are secondary to the main message—God and His relationship to the human race.

Question 8

Why Do Some Christians Try To “Make the Bible Fit” The Latest Theories of Science (Concordism)

One of the approaches which Christians take, with respect to the issue of the Bible and science, assumes that Scripture must “fit” the latest results of modern science. Those who hold this position see God as having revealed Himself in two Books—the Bible and the “Book of Nature.” Each of these books must tell the same story. We can summarize this position as follows:

1. The Theory Explained: The Bible Must Fit With The Results Of Modern Science

There are many Christians who feel they must make the Bible correspond to the current scientific theories of the day. If the latest scientific theory calls for the universe to be ancient, then the Bible will be found to teach an ancient universe. If the theory of evolution is considered a scientific fact, then the Bible will be made to teach evolution. Those who take this approach (called concordists) go first to modern scientific theory to determine what is true and then interpret the Bible in that light.

Concordists argue that we have to be willing to revise our interpretation of what the Bible means because of modern scientific understanding. Since science has advanced, Bible-believers must acknowledge that we may not always have properly understood the meaning that the authors of Scripture intended to convey.

However, they argue that the fact that Christians revise their interpretation of the Bible does not mean that we have weakened its authority.

2. Do We Have Two Revelations Of Truth? (Science And Scripture)

Some Christians believe that that God has given to humanity two distinct revelations of truth. One of these revelations is found in Holy Scripture while the other is found in nature. According to this theory, each of these revelations is equally authoritative.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The Bible is the textbook on theology and doctrine, but it is not a textbook on science. The Book of Genesis only answers the questions of “Who” created the universe and “why” He did it. Yet, it does not deal with issues as to “when” God created, or “how” He went about doing it. This is the job of the scientist.

While God has appointed teachers in the church to properly interpret the Scripture, He has also appointed scientists to properly interpret nature. Bible teachers should let the scientist explain “when” and “how” the universe came to be in its present state. Theologians should not attempt to enter the domain of science.

Response: There Are Dangerous Consequences To This Position

In response, many people see dangerous consequences to this position. The main problem which arises is when we have a conflict between what is seemingly the clear teaching of Scripture and the latest finds of science. What are we supposed to do?

According to those who hold this theory, it is the Bible teacher who must rethink his or her understanding of Scripture. The Bible must be re-interpreted to fit the latest findings of science in order to bring Scripture into harmony with science.

Taking this approach reduces the authority of God’s Word and places it in the hands of finite scientists. If Christians make modern science more authoritative than Scripture, the Bible is then at the mercy of the latest theories of a changing science.

Indeed, Scripture cannot be continually changed to fit the present theories of science. Such an approach robs the Bible of its authority as well as casting doubts on its credibility. Modern scientific “truth” is limited and relative, while biblical truth is absolute. This is not the way to approach issues regarding the Bible and science.

In sum, constant reinterpretation of the Scriptures to make it conform to modern science undermines the Bible’s credibility.

There Are Many Enemies Within The Church

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Unfortunately, we often find the bitterest enemies of the Genesis creation account not outside of the church but actually within the church. There are those who insist that our theology must fit the latest discoveries of modern unbelieving science.

Science, therefore, becomes God. Hence, Bible-believers must adjust their theology to fit the latest scientific findings. Therefore, we find in Christian circles the question, “What do the latest findings of science say?” rather than, “What do the Scriptures say?”

The sad thing about a position like this is that it has such a low view of Scripture. Whenever “science” and the Bible are in conflict, it is always the Bible that, in one manner or another, must give way. In fact, we are never told that “science” should correct its answers in light of Scripture.

Instead, it should be just the opposite. Indeed, on whatever subject the Bible speaks, whether it might be the creation of the universe, the Fall of the human race, the Genesis Flood, or the redemption of humanity, the Scriptures are authoritative and true. It provides us with God’s Word on these issues.

Furthermore, we are to think God’s thoughts after Him, and His thoughts are expressed in the words of Scripture. When these thoughts have to do with the origin of humanity, we must trust what He says since His Word is always truthful.

There Is A Proper Role For Science

This does not mean that Christians totally ignore the findings of science. Science has an important role. However, that role is to help us understand the Scripture—it is not to tell us what we should believe. The Book of Nature will ultimately confirm the things written in Scripture.

However, as the Bible clearly tells us, nature is fallen—it is not in the perfect state in which it was originally created. Furthermore, humans are likewise fallen limited creatures, blinded by sin.

Therefore, we cannot ultimately trust our own conclusions about science and nature because we do not have complete knowledge of the issue. The

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

only One who knows everything is God Himself. It is to Him, and Him alone, whom we must go to find the answers.

Summary To Question 8

Why Do Some Christians Try To “Make The Bible Fit”

The Latest Theories Of Science (Concordism)

When faced with an issue of a scientific nature, many Christians first look to modern science for an answer rather than Holy Scripture. They believe that science and Scripture must tell the same story.

However, they also believe the references in Scripture to areas of science and nature are so general and vague that they can be interpreted to fit the latest views of science. Among other things, this view is known as “Concordism.”

The main objection to the concordist view is that it always makes Scripture subject to the most recent views of modern science. The authority to make factual statements concerning the earth and the universe do not go to Scripture but rather they go to unbelieving science. Therefore, we are supposed to interpret the Bible based upon what science tells us. It alone gives us the final answers.

Many Christians see this as a very dangerous approach to this question. Indeed, this perspective does not seem to have a very high view of the Word of God. God’s revelation is supposedly so vague on these matters as to be meaningless. Why bother even recording the statements about science and nature if they can mean whatever one wants them to mean?

Furthermore, this position does not take seriously what the Bible has to say about creation itself or the nature of human beings. Creation is fallen—it is not in its original perfect state. Therefore, when we examine nature, we should expect to see certain imperfections.

In addition, human beings are sinful, fallen creatures. We do not have the capability to come to irrefutable conclusions regarding science, nature, the earth, and the universe. Because we have been blinded by sin, we are not in a position to give final answers. Indeed, none of us have that capability.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

While we certainly should not ignore the findings of science, we should not elevate them to a position which they do not deserve. The last Word on any matter can only come from the Creator Himself. Indeed, He was the only One present when the universe came into existence!

Therefore, it is crucial that we discover whether or not He has commented on any particular issue regarding science. We can only discover this from a study of the Scripture.

Thus, we must always go to Scripture first to determine if it has a specific answer to our questions. If it does, then we must accept that answer and then interpret the findings of modern science in that light.

Question 9

Why Do Some Christians Believe That The Bible Makes Mistakes In Areas Of Science? (Limited Inerrancy)

There are some Bible-believing Christians who accept the idea of a limited inerrancy of Scripture when it comes to matters of science and nature. This means that the Bible is not correct in every statement which it makes on these subjects.

In fact, it may be in error when speaking of matters of science and nature. However, these Christians say that it does not really matter because the Scripture is not concerned with teaching us any scientific truth.

The Theory Explained: Scripture Contains Errors In Areas Of Science

This approach can be summarized as follows. The Bible is God's Word to humankind, yet it contains some errors in areas of science, history, and geography. The fact is that God did not protect the writers from error when they wrote about these particular subjects.

Some who hold this view say that the Bible teaches such things as a flat-earth, a three-storied universe, and that the sky was understood to be a solid dome. Basically, they believe God accommodated Himself to the ignorance of the times. He did not try to set the record straight as to the nature of the universe since this was not His purpose.

However, the theological statements in Scripture, those written about God, heaven, hell, and our eternal salvation, are supposedly error-free. In these instances, God protected the authors from making mistakes.

Thus, since the purpose of Scripture was to teach these theological truths, errors in these other subjects do not affect the meaning or the trustworthiness of the account.

There Are Major Problems With This View

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

This view of Scripture has obvious problems. For one thing, if the biblical writers were mistaken in some of their historical, geographical, and scientific references which they made, then why, one might ask, should their statements in the theological realm be trusted?

Indeed, it is meaningless to assert that the biblical writers made errors in history, science, and geography, but were kept error-free when they recorded statements in the theological realm (heaven, hell, salvation, etc.).

Put another way, this particular point of view has us believe that statements that we can investigate (history, science, geography) contain some errors but statements that are beyond the realm of any type of investigation (salvation, heaven, hell, etc.) are without error. This approach causes many more problems than it solves.

God Has Revealed Himself In History

From the Bible, we learn that the living God has set the revelation about Himself in history. The Lord did not give it in the form of a theological textbook although He certainly could have done it this way.

Since He has given us the revelation of Himself and His mighty deeds in history, it does not make any sense that God would give us wrong information about any subject. Indeed, it makes no sense whatsoever.

If we reject the statements about science and nature as being inaccurate, then the logical conclusion is that the God of the Bible has revealed Himself to humanity in a book that contains scientific inaccuracies and outdated cultural patterns. Certainly, this would not be a book that anyone would want to trust.

The Bible Is Not A Textbook Of Modern Science But Neither Does It Make Mistakes

A phrase that is often repeated is “the Bible is not a textbook of modern science.” This is obvious. Nobody contends that the Bible could be used as a textbook for paleontology, astronomy, or biochemistry.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Often, however, an illogical assumption accompanies this statement. It usually goes something like this: “Because the Bible was not specifically written to teach science, it may contain errors of fact about scientific matters.”

But this reasoning does not follow. The fact that the Bible was written mainly to communicate spiritual truth does not logically imply that it contains errors of scientific fact. This is especially true when we realize that Scripture came from the hand of God Himself—the Creator of the universe.

The Bible is not a “textbook of modern science” but it does give a scientist a general framework within which he or she can work. Scientists, who are Bible-believers, should begin by assuming the Bible is true in everything which it speaks.

Therefore, we should start with the conviction that Scripture teaches us accurately about creation, the Flood, and other matters related to science and nature. Never should we assume that the writers of Scripture were somehow in error when they related God’s truth about the world around us. Indeed, the God of the Bible does not lie.

Summary To Question 9

Why Do Some Christians Believe That The Bible Makes Mistakes In Areas Of Science? (Limited Inerrancy)

There are a number of Bible-believers who feel the Scripture does not contain anything useful in the areas of the Bible and science. However, there are others who go even further than this. They insist the Bible actually makes mistakes in many of its references concerning Scripture and science.

Indeed, they see the Bible teaching an unscientific mythological view of the universe. In other words, they hold that what the Bible has to say about the nature of the universe does not match up to known reality.

However, they insist that this does not really matter because the theological truths are the things which are truly important. In those areas, the Bible does not make mistakes.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Consequently, the mythical view of the world which was held by the biblical writers has nothing to do with the truths they teach in the theological realm. We can still trust the message of the Bible though we cannot literally trust its scientific statements.

This view is not really convincing at all. If there are obvious mistakes in the writings of Scripture, then why should anyone consider the Bible to be a Book different from any other? In fact, why should we believe anything that it says?

Indeed, if one can prove errors in Scripture in matters which we can investigate, such as historical, scientific, and geographical references, then why should we think that Scripture is somehow error-free in issues that are beyond our ability to check out? What gives us this confidence?

Furthermore, we must stress that there is no need to assume that the Bible makes any scientifically inaccurate statements. To the contrary, the evidence shows us that Scripture is accurate in its statements about science and nature when we correctly understand what the writers are trying to tell us.

Therefore, the idea that the Bible makes mistakes in the area of science is not proven by the facts. Consequently, this is not the best way that we should understand the scientific references in the Bible.

Question 10

Should The Bible Be Consulted To Answer Scientific Questions?

In what sense should we look to the Bible as an authority on science? Should we seriously consider this ancient book to have the last word on questions of a scientific nature? Or should we assume the Bible has nothing to say about these issues. There are a number of answers given to these questions.

1. The Theory Explained: Scientific Statements Are To Be Taken Seriously

Those who hold this view believe that it makes sense biblically and scientifically that the Bible does intend to give us factual information about areas pertaining to science and nature. The Bible, from beginning to end, contains a report of facts that are meant to be understood literally—at face value. This includes areas of science and nature.

Indeed, either the creation account has a purely human origin and is meaningless, or it has been revealed by the Creator and is, therefore, binding on all of humankind.

2. Unbelievers Do Not Think The Bible Should Be Consulted

To many people the Bible is a book like any other book. It was written by humans and is therefore fallible. It is argued, that any biblical reference about science only reflects the unscientific and mythical view held at the time.

Thus, the Bible is a book of human origin and its scientific statements are meaningless because they reflect the limitations of their times and are contradicted by modern science.

Consequently, those who hold this view feel that modern science is free to go wherever it pleases without any reference to the Bible.

3. The Bible Claims To Speak Authoritatively On All Matters

Does the Bible speak with the authority of the living God or is it merely a human production? From the first page until the last, the Bible claims to be the authoritative Word of God. It claims to have the last word on all matters of faith and practice.

The Bible not only makes these claims, it also gives evidence to substantiate them (we have dealt with some of the evidence that the Bible is the Word of God in two of our books, *The Case for Christianity*, and *10 Reasons to Trust The Bible*).

If God exists, then it is clear that humanity needs to hear from Him. The Bible says that God has revealed truth to human beings that we would not otherwise know.

4. God's Revelation In The Bible Answers Our Ultimate Questions

It is necessary that God speaks to us so we can know who He is and what He is like. The Bible says that God cannot be directly approached by humans. Paul wrote to Timothy:

He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No one has ever seen him, nor ever will. To him be honor and power forever (1 Timothy 6:16 NLT).

God, by nature, is inaccessible to sinful humanity. Therefore, we can only know as much about Him as He chooses to reveal. Without His divine revelation, we are only guessing when we speak about Him.

5. Jesus Christ Trusted Everything Written In Scripture

The main reason as to why Christians accept the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God is the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be God the Son.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Furthermore, He backed up His claim with convincing evidence. If He is the One Whom He claimed to be, then He has the last word on every matter. Indeed, there is no higher authority than Him!

As we survey the evidence, we will discover that Jesus believed the Bible to be God's Word in both testaments. He taught that the Old Testament was God's Word and He "pre-approved" the New Testament before it had been written. We discover the following things:

Jesus Believed That The Old Testament Was God's Word

Jesus recognized the existence of Old Testament Scripture. He said to the religious leaders of His day:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me (John 5:39 ESV).

There was a distinct group of writings that contained God's divine authority. Jesus, as well as the religious leaders of His day, recognized this.

Jesus also said that the Old Testament Scripture was the Word of God. In fact, in another place, we find Him saying the following to the religious rulers of His day:

Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death' (Matthew 15:3,4 NLT).

Jesus believed that the Old Testament Scripture recorded the words of God. There is no doubt about this.

Jesus Believed The Old Testament Could Not Be Altered

The Lord Jesus also testified that the Scripture could not be broken or altered. John records Him saying:

And you know that the Scriptures cannot be altered (John 10:35 NLT).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Here Jesus testifies to the nature of Scripture—it cannot be altered it cannot be changed. Indeed, it is the Word of the living God.

In another place, Jesus made it clear that the Old Testament could not have been altered or changed, even in the slightest. Matthew records Him saying:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (Matthew 5:17-18 NIV).

Since Jesus demonstrated Himself to be the Son of God, His word on the matter is final. By definition, God knows everything and Jesus, being God, would know whether or not the Old Testament was His revelation to humanity. He made it clear that it was.

Therefore, we have the witness of Jesus Himself that the Old Testament was divinely inspired by God.

Jesus Also Authenticated The New Testament

Not only is the Old Testament the Word of God, the New Testament is also considered to be the divinely inspired Word of God for the following reasons.

Jesus' Words Are Of Divine Origin

All throughout Jesus' ministry the divine origin of His words was stressed. For example, John records Him saying the following:

But all who reject me and my message will be judged at the day of judgment by the truth I have spoken. I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me gave me his own instructions as to what I should say (John 12:48,49 NLT).

In addition, Jesus said His words would never pass away:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35 KJV).

That Jesus said His words would last forever hints at the idea they would be recorded.

The Promise Of Jesus Concerning The New Testament

The main reason we believe that the New Testament has been divinely inspired of God is the promise of Jesus. Before His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, Jesus made the following promises to His disciples:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26 ESV).

He also said:

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning (John 15:26,27 NIV).

We have, at least, two promises of Jesus contained in these verses.

1. The Holy Spirit would guide these disciples into all truth.
2. They would be given the gift of total recall of the things He said and did.

These promises look forward to a written body of truth. Those men to whom Jesus made these promises either wrote the books of the New Testament or had control over what writings were considered to be divinely inspired.

Since God had already demonstrated His desire to commit His Word to writing by giving His people the Old Testament, it would follow that He would do the same in a New Testament. The divine inspiration of the New Testament, therefore, was authenticated ahead of time.

6. The Biblical Creation Account Is Unique

Since God Himself created the universe, He certainly knows the various laws which He established. Therefore, any revelation from God would also reveal an exhaustive comprehension of these universal laws which He has set down. While it is clear that the Bible is not meant to be read as a scientific textbook, the facts of science fit the facts we find recorded in the Bible.

Therefore, when the laws of science are reflected within the pages of Holy Scripture, these laws are presented correctly. This is all the more impressive when we understand the times in which the various books were written. There is nothing like it in any other ancient religion.

7. Spiritual Truths Are Given In The Form Of An Historical Narrative

While it is true that the real purpose of the Biblical creation-narrative in the Book of Genesis is of a thoroughly spiritual nature it does not mean that we should disregard the scientific references.

Indeed, it cannot be denied that the first chapter of the Bible conveys its spiritual teachings in the form of a historical narrative. Therefore, just as we must not overlook the spiritual content of the creation story, we should also not despise what it contains regarding the history of creation.

Therefore, it seems more consistent to let the Bible speak with authority on the areas of science that it touches rather than assuming the writers were only composing an allegory or giving us some poetical description of what actually took place.

8. The Bible Was Written In Non-Technical Language

It is important to understand that scientific truth is communicated in Scripture in non-technical language. Whenever any event in nature occurs, there are two basic ways of explaining it.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

One way is to give a technical scientific explanation. Science has a language of its own, and events are often communicated in technical scientific language.

However, technical scientific language is only understood by very few people. Indeed, most of us do not understand the technical terms which scientists often use to describe the world around us.

Scripture Is Written In The Language Of Appearance (Non-Scientific Writing)

A second way of explaining things is to relate how the event appears to the observer. It is this non-technical way in which the Bible describes events that pertain to science and nature.

For example, the events of creation recorded in the early chapters of Genesis are not described in terms of modern scientific classification but are described from the vantage point of an observer.

The Bible does not use the technical language of science, but rather the language of the marketplace. The biblical writers dealing with concepts of their times used the language of their times. The scriptural language is the language of everyday use.

Hence, the words of the Bible are neither scientific nor unscientific in nature, but rather *non-scientific*. The language of Scripture is the language of appearance. Biblical writers describe things as they appear to an ordinary observer.

In fact, Jesus Christ taught in such a way that even a child could understand. This makes it clear that God desires humankind to comprehend important things about Him regardless of their education, background, or IQ.

9. Scripture Does Not Intend To Give Technical Answers

In addition, the Bible does not attempt to give technical answers to technical questions. Since the Bible speaks in everyday language, it is not proper to look to it for answers explained in technical scientific language.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Since the Bible is a book for all peoples of all ages, we would expect that the terms it uses with reference to nature would be written in simple, easy-to-understand language. This is exactly what we find.

Indeed, almost all of the vocabulary of the Scripture, which refers to nature, is written in non-scientific language. There is no attempt to give technical scientific explanations.

10. The Main Issue In Scripture Is God And Humanity

We again stress that the Bible was mainly written to explain the relationship of the One true God to the human race. In fact, it explains who He is, who we are, as well as how we can have a personal relationship with Him. This is the theme of Scripture.

Furthermore, we find that God has revealed to us what He is like in the Person of Jesus Christ. John wrote:

No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known (John 1:18 NET).

God the Son has explained God to us. If we want to know what God is like, we only need to look at Jesus.

Likewise, Paul's central theme was Jesus Christ. Christ is the One who reveals to us how we can be saved from our sins. Paul wrote:

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15 NKJV).

The Bible was written to make its readers wise for salvation. This salvation only comes through Jesus Christ. Once we are saved, we begin our personal relationship with God. This is what the message of the Bible communicates to us.

11. The Bible Gives Us A Philosophy Of Science

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Not only do the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation, they are also necessary to provide a philosophy of science for modern humankind. To many, this sounds like something which is impossible.

But this is not the case at all. Indeed, it is not only possible for an ancient book such as the Bible to provide the modern Christian with a philosophy of science, it is absolutely essential that this happens.

In fact, for the church of Jesus Christ to have an impact on our lost and dying world, we need to have answers to the secular outlook which characterizes our age. These answers are only found in Scripture.

12. We Need To See All Things In God's Light

In sum, we need to see everything in the light of God's Word. The Bible says:

Indeed, the fountain of life is with you. In your light we see light (Psalm 36:9 God's Word).

It is only in His light that we see light. Therefore, since the Word of God is our only infallible source of knowledge, we should go first to it to determine what it is trying to teach us.

If we conclude that certain statements in Scripture are attempting to teach us certain things about the nature of the universe, then we should believe these statements.

Conclusion: The Bible Should Be Used To Answer The Questions It Intends To Answer

Therefore, the Bible should be consulted to answer scientific questions if this was the intent of the author of Scripture.

Indeed, it is the only Book where the living God has revealed Himself to us.

It Is Important That We Discover The Intent From Each Passage

However, it is crucial that we make certain that the intent is there. This is the question which must be answered. To what extent does the Bible intend to teach us matters of science? To answer this question, we must look at each passage separately and discover from the context the purpose of the author as well as how the original audience would have understood it.

Thus, the Bible should be consulted to answer certain scientific questions if this was the purpose of the author of Scripture. The way to determine this is to examine each biblically passage individually.

Summary To Question 10 Should The Bible Be Consulted To Answer Scientific Questions?

The Bible is unlike any other book. Indeed, it is God's Word to humanity. Though God did not dictate the Bible from heaven, it is a divine book. The human authors were led by God the Holy Spirit. He is the One who supervised the writing of the original text. This includes the very words and the very phrases which were chosen.

The Bible bears God's seal of truth in all of its statements—including those of a scientific nature. It is, therefore, the final authority on all matters about which it speaks. Consequently, it should be consulted for any question that we may have, and this includes scientific questions.

However, we must first establish that it is the intent of the Bible to give specific answers to these questions. Only if we discover that the Scripture intends to answer these questions, can we look to the Bible for specific answers.

Christians must let the light of God's Word be the final determiner of what is true and what is not. Scientific matters, when spoken of in Scripture, should be studied, not ignored.

Furthermore, the Bible should be interpreted at face value. We should never attempt to inject current scientific theories into it to make the Bible fit the latest scientific theory. In other words, we need to allow the Bible to

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

speaks for itself. In fact, if it is what it claims to be, the Word of God, then we must go to it alone for answers to our ultimate questions.

Consequently, it is a big mistake to surrender such matters as the origin of the universe and the beginning and development of life on the earth to the changing theories of modern unbelieving scientists.

The final authority for the believer must rest in God's revelation to us in Holy Scripture. This is the only place where we can go to in order to discover ultimate answers.

Question 11

Why Do Some Scientific Theories Contradict The Bible?

As we examine the origin and development of the universe, we will be discussing both modern science and the Bible. Though many times they will agree, there are times they will not. The author of the Bible is the God of truth, but scientists are not so infallible. Scientific truth can never contradict biblical truth, but scientific theories do contradict the Bible in numerous ways.

Why is this so? If the Bible is God's Word, and contains accurate science, then why do we find scientific theories at odds with Scripture? In answering this question, the following points need to be made.

1. **The Basic Problem Is With The Assumptions, Not The Evidence**

To begin with, the problem is not with the evidence that science discovers. Rather it boils down to one's assumptions. All of us have our own biases and assumptions concerning the world around us. If a person assumes the theory of mindless evolution is true, then they will interpret the facts a different way than one who believes in divine creation. While all scientists deal with the same facts, the difference lies in the interpretation of the facts. The difference in interpretation can usually be traced back to the differences in assumptions.

2. **People Have The Same Facts, But Come To Different Conclusions**

It is important to realize that two people who look at the same facts with different assumptions will come to different conclusions.

We find an example of this in the New Testament when Jesus was speaking to the multitude. He said:

“Father, give glory to your name.” A voice from heaven said, “I have given it glory, and I will give it glory again.” The crowd standing there

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

heard the voice and said that it had thundered. Others in the crowd said that an angel had talked to him (John 12:28,29 God's Word).

From this account, we find that all of the people had the same facts—they heard the voice of God the Father. Yet some would not believe what they obviously heard. They attributed it to thunder or to an angel.

Why? It was because of their assumptions. Since, these people did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, they therefore assumed God the Father would not approve of His ministry. When the Father spoke His approval of Jesus and His ministry, certain people chose not to believe what they clearly heard.

In other words, the voice was not rejected because of the evidence—it was rejected because of their previous assumptions. This illustrates how people can have the same facts before them and come up with different interpretations of those facts based upon their assumptions.

Scientific theories fit into the same category. The assumptions which the scientist brings to the data that they discover will influence the way the data is interpreted. The difference lies not in the facts, but in the interpretation of the facts. This is the reason why we have some scientific theories that contradict the Bible.

3. Some People May Have The Wrong Interpretation Of Scripture

A further cause of the apparent conflict between the Bible and science lies with believers and their incorrect interpretation of the Word of God. In other words, the problem is not with the Bible, rather, it is with the wrong interpretation of Scripture.

Indeed, some of the so-called contradictions between faith in the Bible and the data of science are, in fact, not a conflict between the Bible and assured scientific knowledge—they may be incorrect interpretations of the Bible. Therefore, Christians must be careful not to assign blame to a scientific theory that contradicts Scripture until they are assured that their interpretation of Scripture is what the Bible actually says on the issue.

4. There Is No Ultimate Contradiction Between The Bible And Science

We emphasize that there is no contradiction between what is written in the Bible and the evidence of science. The evidence we find in the world around us will sooner or later confirm biblical faith.

The New Testament Message Of Jesus Christ Is Based Upon The Evidence

As far as evidence is concerned, the Bible emphasizes that our faith in Christ is based upon fact, not fiction. Indeed, the Apostle Paul defined the New Testament message as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He explained it in this manner:

Brothers and sisters, I'm making known to you the Good News which I already told you, which you received, and on which your faith is based. In addition, you are saved by this Good News if you hold on to the doctrine I taught you, unless you believed it without thinking it over. I passed on to you the most important points of doctrine that I had received: Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted. He was placed in a tomb. He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 God's Word).

Paul declared that faith and evidence were so closely related that if Jesus Christ has not risen from the dead, then the faith of the believer is worthless. He wrote the following to the Corinthians:

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17 NLT).

The tomb was empty on that first Easter and many eyewitnesses testified that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. That was the consistent theme of the New Testament writers as they proclaimed the Christian message and intelligently defended their faith.

The Scriptures Provide Evidence For Faith, Reasons To Believe

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

We can give another example of the importance of genuine evidence as far as the Christian faith is concerned. In the first recorded message after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter based his argument upon objective evidence. He pointed to the world of reality to confirm the resurrection by appealing to the knowledge of his listeners. He said:

People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. This prophecy was speaking of Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, and we all are witnesses of this (Acts 2:22,32 NLT).

Note that Peter emphasized objective evidence as he proclaimed the message of Christ. He said that Jesus did miracles, wonders, and signs which all of the people were aware of.

Since all of them knew of the previous miracles of Jesus, the claim that God had raised Him from the dead is consistent with what they already knew about His ability. Again, we see the importance of facts and the Christian faith.

In his letter to believers, Peter further emphasized the value of attesting evidence. He wrote the following words:

For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:16 CSB).

He tells his readers that it is the evidence which should cause them to believe in Jesus. Once again, the facts are appealed to—not merely an emotional appeal or to eyewitnesses that could not be cross-examined.

The Scriptures Were Written To Create Belief In Jesus

The Apostle John said that he wrote his gospel for the purpose of creating belief in Jesus Christ. He put it this way:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30,31 ESV).

John pointed to the visible signs performed by Jesus to substantiate that belief in Christ is something which is reasonable.

The Bible Emphasizes Reason And Common Sense

The Apostle Paul also emphasized the use of reason, evidence as well as common sense in testing and understanding reality. When Paul came to the synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, the Scripture records the following took place:

As usual, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead: “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah” (Acts 17:2,3 CSB).

Paul argued, or reasoned, with them from the Scripture. He appealed to the Scripture to substantiate his argument.

The same chapter records Paul’s dealings with people in the city of Athens. The Bible says:

While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he saw that the city had statues of false gods everywhere. This upset him. He held discussions in the synagogue with Jews and converts to Judaism. He also held discussions every day in the public square with anyone who happened to be there (Acts 17:16,17 God’s Word).

Paul discussed with people the evidence for the Christian faith. Again, we find that Scripture testifies that Christianity unites faith and evidence.

The Bible Is Not Anti-Scientific

In addition, an examination of the Bible makes it clear that it is not anti-scientific. Jesus Christ, for example, taught exact observation. To validate that He was indeed the promised Messiah, Jesus told some disciples of John the Baptist to tell John what they had seen and heard. We read:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Then he told John's disciples, "Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor" (Luke 7:22 NLT).

Their reporting of what they observed—Jesus Christ performing miracles—was considered sufficient evidence to convince John that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

In another instance, we find that the Gospel of John refers to testifying to what is "known and have seen:"

I assure you, I am telling you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe us (John 3:11 NLT).

The emphasis is on the observable facts.

Jesus encouraged the people of His day to observe nature. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples to "look at the birds in the sky," and "notice the flowers growing in the fields." Jesus said:

"Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or gather the harvest into barns. Yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single hour to your life by worrying? And why worry about clothes? Notice how the flowers grow in the field. They never work or spin yarn for clothes" (Matthew 6:26-28 God's Word).

They were to pay attention to the world around them.

John the Apostle emphasized the believers heard, saw, and touched the risen Jesus. He wrote the following:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3 CSB).

The early Christians based their faith upon what they knew, what they had heard as well as what they had seen. In other words, their faith was based upon the facts.

The Biblical Concept Of God Fits The Known Evidence

Once again, we emphasize that the biblical concept of God, and His mighty works in history, fits the known evidence. Indeed, we should not expect to find otherwise since the God of Scripture is the Creator of all things.

The Apostle Paul said the following to a crowd that had gathered in the city of Athens:

He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need there is (Acts 17:24,25 NLT).

The God of the Bible, the same God proclaimed by and revealed fully in Jesus Christ, has a far better explanation of the origin of the universe than does modern unbelieving science.

Furthermore, as Paul stated, He does indeed satisfy every need we humans have—whether it be physical, spiritual or intellectual.

There Are Two Basic Errors Which All Unbelievers Make

Long ago, Jesus pointed out two simple errors which most unbelievers make. Matthew records the following response of Christ to a certain question from the religious rulers:

Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29 NKJV).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

We find the same problem today. People do not know what the Scriptures really say neither do they know the power of God. Once the Scriptures and God's power are properly understood then the problems between the Bible and science will vanish. This is another reason why it is important that we make a diligent study of the Scripture.

In sum, the question of our origins as well as the purpose of our existence cannot be answered by twenty-first century unbelieving science. It is only the Bible, the Word of the living God, which provides reasonable answers to these questions about who we are, why we are here, and what will happen to us when we die.

Summary To Question 11 **Why Do Some Scientific Theories Contradict The Bible?**

There are some scientific theories which contradict Scripture. Nobody doubts this. Why is this so? Why would the results of science contradict what is found in the Scripture? If the Bible is God's Word should not the facts of science line up with what is taught in the Bible?

Actually, they do. Science and Scripture, when properly understood, do not contradict each other. A number of points need to be made.

First, it is not the facts of science that are in conflict with the Bible but rather the interpretation of these facts. Furthermore, interpretations are based upon assumptions and the wrong assumptions can and do lead to the wrong conclusions.

This is one of the reasons as to why we find certain scientific theories contradicting Holy Scripture. In other words, the facts do not contradict the Bible—it is the assumptions which are brought to the facts which present a conflict between science and Scripture. Indeed, if a person rejects the idea of the supernatural, then they will interpret any and all facts through that anti-supernatural lens.

It must also be remembered that scientific theories represent interpretations of the facts made by fallible human beings. Indeed, they are not the facts themselves. This distinction between facts and the interpretation of facts is often overlooked.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The atheistic theory of evolution is usually presented as a fact rather than one possible interpretation of the facts. Rarely are we told that there are alternative interpretations of these facts which are just as valid scientifically as the theory of mindless random evolution.

Christians can also be guilty of causing supposed conflicts between Scripture and science. They do this by making the Bible say something that it does not say. Indeed, when one promotes an incorrect interpretation of the Bible, such as the earth being the center of our solar system, then it is no wonder that people assume Scripture and science are in conflict.

Therefore, we must strive to find a proper interpretation of both science and Scripture. Once this occurs, there will be no ultimate conflict between the two.

Long ago, Jesus pointed out the main reason for the conflict between the Bible and unbelieving science. He told the religious leaders of His day that they were ignorant of two basic things. He said, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God."

The same errors are with us today. Consequently, a proper understanding of what the Scriptures actually say, and of the power of the God of the Bible, would go a long way to solve the apparent conflicts between science and the Bible.

Ultimately there will be no conflict between the facts of science and the teaching of Scripture because the same God which divinely inspired the Bible is the same God which created the universe and the laws by which it operates.

Question 12

Why Did The Church Condemn Galileo For Saying The Earth Was Not The Immovable Center Of The Solar System?

It is necessary to address a common misconception or misperception that the general public holds—Bible believers are opposed to the advancement of science.

Indeed, it is a popular perception that those who believe the Bible and what it says about matters of science and nature are enemies of truth and scientific advancement. In fact, there have been certain events in the past which seemed to show that Christians were against the advancement of scientific knowledge.

One such instance was the episode of the church with the scientist Galileo. This incident is supposedly typical of the way the church has dealt with issues of science. In other words, Christians deny the obvious truths of science because they ignorantly cling to what the Bible says about the world around them. The facts are either ignored or denied.

Furthermore, it is contended that Christians also shut their eyes to scientific advancement for fear it may contradict Scripture. They do not want science to have the freedom to experiment and test their findings for in doing so, it might contradict the Bible.

Is this the case? Did the incident with Galileo demonstrate that the Christian faith is at odds with the idea of science advancing? What really happened with Galileo? Did his findings contradict Scripture?

Understanding The Real Issue: What Was The Immovable Center Of Our Solar System?

Galileo Galilei lived in the 17th century. At that time, the common belief at that time was that the earth, not the sun, was immovable center of our solar system. However, this view needs to be properly understood because it is often wrongly stated.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The ancient view of Ptolemy was that the earth was the center of the solar system. He believed that the sun and all of the planets orbited the earth. Later, the findings of Copernicus showed that it was the sun, not the earth which the planets orbited. While it was generally agreed in Galileo's time that all of the planets orbited the sun, it was debated whether the earth too was orbiting the sun and whether it was actually the immovable center of the universe.

Therefore, the issue is not what has been so often reported—whether the planets revolved around the earth or whether they revolved around the sun. It was agreed that the planets revolved around the sun. The question was, “Did the earth, like these other planets, also revolve around the sun?” Was the earth the immovable center of the solar system or was it the sun?

This was the issue upon which Galileo contradicted the accepted wisdom of the day. He believed that the earth was like the rest of the planets in that it too revolved around the sun.

Therefore, the sun, not the earth, was the immovable center of our solar system. While Galileo's use of the telescope brought conclusions that were based upon scientific observation it contradicted some of the conventional wisdom of the day. This is why Galileo found himself in trouble with the church authorities. As is well-known, Galileo was tried by the church for his findings, found guilty, and sentenced in the year 1633.

Galileo Was Not Trying To Disprove Scripture

Contrary to what is often taught, Galileo was not out to disprove what the Bible had to say about the earth and its relationship to the solar system. He believed that the idea of the sun being the center of the solar system was compatible with Scripture. Galileo believed that the certain interpretations of Scripture were wrong but not the Bible itself.

Galileo's Findings Did Not Contradict Scripture

While Galileo's findings contradicted the idea that the earth was the immovable center of our solar system it did not contradict what the Bible has to say about the earth. Why is this so? It is because the Bible records things from the perspective of an observer here upon the earth.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

From our vantage point the sun does revolve around the earth. However, nowhere does the Scripture state that the earth is the immovable center of our solar system. Never!

The Roman Catholic Church Does Not Speak For All Christians

Something else needs to be emphasized. The findings of Galileo were challenged by the Roman Catholic Church. This is not the same as saying the findings of Galileo were challenged by the truths of Holy Scripture.

The Roman Church does not speak for all Christians. Indeed, time after time the Roman Church has made pronouncements that contradict the truths found in Scripture. Their condemnation of Galileo is irrelevant as far as Christians are concerned. The real question is, “Did the findings and conclusions of Galileo contradict the Bible?” The answer is a resounding, “No!”

Galileo Has Wrongly Been Seen As A Scientific Martyr

The Roman Catholic church’s mistreatment of Galileo gave the perception that Christianity was against scientific advancement. Today Galileo is hailed today as a scientific martyr. Yet the problem was neither with the Bible nor was it with science. The Galileo situation was an isolated incident. In fact, the entire affair is not a typical example of the relationship between science and theology.

Unfortunately, because of its dramatic circumstances, this incident becomes magnified all out of proportion. Indeed, it has created the popular belief that science stands for freedom and advancement of knowledge while Christianity stands for ignorance, for the oppression of thought, and has no desire to see any real scientific advancement. This is a tragic and incorrect view of the truth. The record needs to be set straight.

Summary To Question 12

Why Did The Church Condemn Galileo For Saying The Earth Was Not The Immovable Center Of The Solar System?

Christians are often wrongly accused of attempting to thwart the advancement of modern science. Indeed, we are said to be enemies of truth

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

because we cling to ancient unscientific superstitions which are found in the Bible.

An example which is usually cited to support this idea concerns the manner in which the Roman Catholic Church dealt with the astronomer Galileo. The incident with the Roman Church and Galileo was truly unfortunate.

In fact, it is doubly tragic in the perception which has resulted from this episode—that Scripture is somehow contradicted by science. Yet once the facts are known we discover that there is no conflict between science and Scripture in the matter of Galileo. The evidence is as follows.

Galileo, a seventeenth century astronomer, rejected the common idea that the earth, not the sun, was the immovable center of the solar system. While it was recognized that the other planets of our solar system revolved around the sun there was a question as to whether the earth also did this. This was the issue. The Roman Catholic Church condemned him for his teaching that the earth, like the rest of the planets, revolved around the sun. Instead, they insisted that the earth was the immovable center of our solar system.

However, it must be emphasized that Galileo did not reject the teaching of Scripture—rather he rejected the unbiblical opinions and interpretation of Scripture of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. We must understand this distinction. Scripture does not teach that the earth is the immovable center of our solar system. Never!

The fact of the matter is that Scripture explains events from an earth-centered viewpoint, from the perspective of an observer. However, it never teaches that the earth is the center of the solar system. Indeed, the Bible is not attempting to teach us technical astronomical truths.

It must also be remembered that the Roman Catholic Church does not speak for all Christians. They are not an infallible source of truth. This incident makes this clear. Indeed, they were wrong to condemn Galileo. Consequently, it is not an issue of science versus Scripture.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Unfortunately, Galileo has been seen as a scientific martyr. He is usually viewed as one of many people who have stood for truth, or science, against the untruths taught by religion. However, this is not what occurred.

In sum, this incident should be seen as the result of the conflict between Galileo and the faulty views of the Roman Church of his day—not the Bible!

Question 13

What Impact Did the Huxley/Wilberforce Debate Have on the Way the Bible And Science Were Perceived?

About a year after the publication of Charles Darwin's now famous book *On the Origin of Species*, a confrontation took place that set the stage for the modern creation/evolution controversy.

In June 1860, at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, a special meeting was held to discuss Darwin's views. This meeting has had enormous influence on the perception of Darwin's view of mindless atheistic evolution when compared to the biblical idea of an intelligent creation by an all-powerful God.

The Debaters: Huxley And Wilberforce

Bishop Samuel Wilberforce addressed the scientific association and spoke against the theory of evolution while English biologist T. H. Huxley defended Darwin.

Among other things, Wilberforce used the famous argument of William Paley—namely a design showed the necessity of a “designer.” Like Paley, he used the illustration of a watch. A watch does not design itself. Rather it testifies to the existence of a designer. Likewise, the universe in all of its intricate details reveals that an intelligent designer is behind it. This Designer is the God of the Bible.

The Typing Monkeys Supposedly Proved Evolution Was Possible

Huxley then put forward the now famous illustration of six eternal monkeys endlessly typing away on six typewriters. Given enough time, Huxley argued that these monkeys could produce an entire book by random chance.

Consequently, given enough time, evolution could produce things what now looks like they have been intelligently designed. Therefore, it is not

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

necessary to call upon the need for a Creator to explain the world as we now know it.

It was reported that the learned bishop did not have an answer to Huxley's argument. This was all the more devastating to the cause of creationism because Wilberforce was not only Professor of Theology at Oxford, he was also Professor of Mathematics. If a professor of mathematics could not answer this argument, then who could?

The Perceived Result: Darwinism Wins Hand Down

For the last hundred and fifty years the story has been told how Huxley won the debate against the ignorant bishop. It seemed to be the classic case of science, or knowledge, versus religion, or blind faith. The scientist obviously had all the facts upon his side.

However, the view that Huxley devastated Wilberforce with the sheer weight of his arguments has been challenged in recent years. It seems the bishop was not the ignorant, ill-informed individual that history has usually characterized him.

Before the debate Wilberforce wrote a critique of *On the Origin of Species* which Darwin himself described as "uncommonly clever" and which "makes very good sense." Therefore, the perception of Wilberforce as merely an ignorant preacher is unfounded.

Furthermore, as it has often been noted, Huxley's argument that six eternal monkey's typing randomly would produce something coherent is clearly fallacious. It is not even mathematically possible that these six monkeys could even type a simple coherent sentence let alone an entire book!

Yet this argument, which has been mathematically disproved over and over again, is still used today to explain how everything in the universe could have developed by blind chance.

The Result: Darwinism Becomes Acceptable

Unfortunately, there was no written record taken during this historic meeting. Therefore, any descriptions we have are from memories of those

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

who attended—Huxley’s friends. The story that circulated was of Huxley’s brilliance and the bishop’s incompetence. The perception was that Darwinism is based solely upon the evidence while creationism, as the Bible teaches, is based entirely upon blind faith. This perception caused Darwin’s theory of evolution to become more acceptable to the masses—including many Christians. The biblical case suffered because of the poor performance of the bishop.

Because of the way the incident was reported many rejected the biblical position as being scientifically absurd. Within ten years, scientific opinion throughout the world had changed from supernatural creationism in favor of mindless evolution. This is the sad result of this debate where, to this day, we are not truly certain who actually did get the best of the other person. However, it does not really matter. In the minds of many, Darwinism had proven itself to be a rational intellectually satisfying alternative to the biblical account of creation by an all-powerful God.

Yet the facts speak otherwise. Indeed, when the evidence is fairly and objectively evaluated it becomes clear that the scientific evidence matches up with Holy Scripture rather than the theory of Charles Darwin which advocates blind random chance.

Summary To Question 13

What Impact Did The Huxley/Wilberforce Debate Have On the Way The Bible And Science Were Perceived?

The Huxley/Wilberforce debate in the nineteenth century was one of a number of incidents which made creationism look unscientific in the eyes of the general public. T.H. Huxley, as it was widely reported, devastated the arguments of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce in one of the first debates ever held on the subject of Darwinism.

Perception is reality and the public perceived that Huxley had evidence on his side while the Bishop only had faith on his side. Thinking people chose to side themselves with Huxley and Darwinism. Science now had a rational theory which replaced the biblical account of creation. Science had prevailed while religion had lost. Or so it seemed.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

While this is the perception it is not the reality. The only reports of what happened have come down from friends of Huxley. The fact is that William Wilberforce was not an uneducated man.

Indeed, he was a mathematics professor at Oxford as well as being a professor of theology. In fact, he wrote a critique of Darwinism which Darwin himself admitted was quite sensible. Therefore, we should not assume that the bishop was overwhelmed with the evidence for evolution. However, the damage has been done.

Once again, we must stress that the facts support the biblical model rather than the model developed from the theory of evolution. In other words, the evidence supports what the Bible says has taken place rather than what Charles Darwin has proposed.

Question 14

What Happened At The Scopes Trial?

There was a famous incident which occurred early in the twentieth century that has furthered the rift between Christianity and the scientific community. It is popularly known as the “Scopes Trial.”

Simply stated, this is what took place. In 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee, a young high school teacher named John Scopes was put on trial for teaching the theory of evolution. At that time, it was against the law in the state of Tennessee to do this. The famous attorney Clarence Darrow defended Scopes while William Jennings Bryan argued the case for the state of Tennessee. Evidence was brought forth for each side.

The trial is usually portrayed as a mockery of justice. Supposedly the facts were obviously on the side of those who were promoting evolution. However, the verdict came down on the side of the creationists. In other words, ignorance won out over the evidence.

What Evidence For Evolution Was Brought Forward?

Interestingly, one of the pieces of evidence presented for the case for evolution was the tooth from “Nebraska man.” This was a molar found in Nebraska in 1922. It was identified as having come from an important transitional form between man and his primate ancestors by at least four well-known scientists: H. Cook, H. F. Osborn, H. H. Wilder, and G. E. Smith. Thus, there was objective proof that humans have descended from a common ancestor with the apes.

Though Nebraska man was used as one of the “proofs” of the theory of evolution at the Scopes trial in 1927, the molar was later correctly identified as belonging to a pig! Yet the damage had been done.

This was not the only scientific mistake that was made from the position of the evolutionists:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

In the record of the Scopes Trial, human evolution was falsely supported with examples like Piltdown Man, vestigial organs, embryonic recapitulation, and human development. Many of these examples have been shown to be fraudulent or untenable.

Even more troubling, the high school textbook that John Scopes used, Hunter's *Civic Biology*, advocated the evolutionary superiority of whites over "Negroes." (This racism was taught by Charles Darwin himself.) The textbook also promoted eugenics as a solution for reducing the population of people considered inferior (Answers in Genesis, www.answersingenesis.org, *The Scopes Trial Settled the Question of Evolution, Argument 11*, November 3, 2018)

Creationists Lost In The Realm Of Public Opinion

Though the creationist position won in the courtroom, it was dealt a further blow in the eyes of the world. They perceived the church as persecuting a helpless biology teacher, as well as not accepting the clear scientific evidence for evolution.

From that time forward, the theory of evolution was almost universally accepted as an established fact of modern science. On the other hand, the doctrine of special creation, as taught in Scripture, was considered to represent the superstitious and anti-scientific beliefs of a former age.

Yet we once again stress that this is not where the evidence leads us. Indeed, the facts are on the side of the biblical view of the earth and the universe rather than the mindless random-chance evolution as proposed by Charles Darwin.

Summary To Question 14 What Happened At The Scopes Trial?

One of the saddest incidents in the history of the Bible and science debate concerned the trial of high school biology teacher John T. Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925.

While the eyes of the nation were watching, this teacher was put on trial for breaking the law of the state of Tennessee by teaching the theory of evolution to his students. Scopes was defended by the famed agnostic

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

defense attorney Clarence Darrow while the case for the state of Tennessee was led by William Jennings Bryan—a three-time candidate for president.

Each side brought forth their experts and evidence. Supposedly the evidence was overwhelmingly on the side of evolution. Yet Scopes was convicted and fined.

The perception was that the creationists were mainly a group of superstitious ignorant people who based their beliefs on blind faith rather than upon the weight of the evidence. While this is certainly not the case, it added to the perception which many people have concerning issues of science and Scripture.

It is indeed a classic example of perception seemingly creating reality. However, the reality is that the evidence is clearly on the side of those who hold to the biblical account of creation rather than those advocating mindless evolution. A fair and objective analysis of the facts will demonstrate this to be so.

Question 15

Has Christianity Opposed The Advancement Of Science?

It is often contended the Christianity has opposed the advancement of science. Indeed, Christians, it is assumed have been the enemies of scientific progress. They have shut their eyes to the discoveries of science and have remained willingly ignorant of the truth. Is this what the facts show? Have Christians stood in the way of scientific progress?

Modern Science Developed From A Christians World View

When the facts are evaluated, we will find that modern science actually developed out of a Christian context! The Bible, from beginning to end, emphasizes an orderly creation with fixed laws in the universe. The God of the Bible who created the universe has established physical laws by which the universe operates. It is upon this understanding of the form and function of the universe that modern science developed.

This biblical view of the universe is in contrast to the actions of the gods of so many other religions. They are erratic. These gods play games with humans and often change the rules. Since their actions are unpredictable, the universe, which they supposedly created, is neither regular nor predictable. This is in complete contrast to the actions of the God of Scripture.

What we have to realize is that early modern science was started by those who lived in a consensus and setting of Christianity. Christianity was necessary for the beginning of modern science for the simple reason that Christianity created a climate of thought which put scientist in a position to investigate the form of the universe.

In fact, many of the early scientists also shared the outlook of Christianity in believing that there is a reasonable God, who has created a reasonable universe, and thus humanity, by the use of our reason, could find out the universe's form.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

So, far from being opposed to the advancement of science and scientific thought, modern science has Bible-believing Christians to thank for its beginnings.

Summary To Question 15

Has Christianity Opposed The Advancement Of Science?

While the perception is that Christianity is opposed to science and has been historically opposed to it, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, we find that it was because people of science took the Bible seriously and the God which it portrays, that modern science and its scientific laws were formed.

Indeed, the belief that a reasonable God who had created a universe of order is what birthed modern science. In fact, scientists such as Newton, Pascal, and Faraday were creationists who believed the Creator had established laws for people and the natural world. It is on this basis that modern science was born.

It is, therefore, so incorrect to say that Christianity opposes the advancement of scientific knowledge. Instead, it should be recognized that modern science had its birth from those who believed that a God of order created all things.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

PART 2
DINOSAURS AND THE BIBLE

This next topic in our book is one that creates a lot of interest—dinosaurs. These huge creatures that once roamed the earth fascinate us all.

There are a number of questions that naturally arise concerning the dinosaurs. What are dinosaurs? Where did they come from? Why did God create them? What happened to them? Could some dinosaurs still be alive today? Does the Bible have anything to say about this subject?

These and similar questions will be addressed in this section of the book.

Question 16

What Are Dinosaurs?

One of the most often-asked questions about Genesis concerns the existence of dinosaurs and how they fit into the Biblical record. Though we know that dinosaurs once roamed our planet there are many unsolved mysteries regarding these creatures.

What did they look like? What does the fossil evidence tell us? Have human beings ever seen dinosaurs? Do any dinosaurs still exist? Does the Bible have anything to say on this subject? We need to make a number of observations.

What Are Dinosaurs?

The word “dinosaur” refers to reptiles that once roamed the planet. The word dinosaur means “terrible lizard.” Therefore, it technically speaks of those creatures that lived on the land, not in the sea.

They Are Distinct From Other Reptiles

Dinosaurs are distinct from modern-day reptiles by the position of their limbs. Dinosaurs had a fully erect posture—the limbs of their body supported them from beneath.

Thus, dinosaurs walked like a horse with their limbs beneath them. This allowed them to walk upright like other mammals. Most modern-day reptiles, such as alligators, have limbs that project from the side. They do not walk like horses, cows, or the dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs ranged greatly in size. The largest dinosaur weighed as much as eighty tons and stood seventy feet in length. The smallest ones were less in size than a chicken.

The History Of The Study Of Dinosaurs

The modern history of the study of dinosaurs takes us back only a few centuries. In 1677, when the first bones were discovered, they were so big

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

that they were thought to belong to a giant elephant. The first name given to them was *Scrotum humanum*. The name “dinosaur” did not come into existence until two centuries later.

A Discovery Is Made In England

In 1822, Mary Anne Mantell, went for a walk along a country road in Sussex, England. As the story goes, she found a stone that glittered in the sunlight. The stone was taken home to her husband who was a fossil collector. Dr. Mantell found the stone contained a tooth that was similar to that of modern reptiles.

However, this tooth was much larger than that of any living reptile. He concluded that it belonged to some extinct plant-eating reptile with teeth like an iguana's. Dr. Mantell is usually given the credit as the person who began to popularize the age of reptiles.

Shortly after this discovery the famous British paleontologist, Sir Richard Owen, coined the term “dinosaur,” or “terrible lizard,” to refer to these ancient reptiles that once roamed the planet.

They Are Bones Of Contention

The fact that dinosaurs existed is beyond dispute. The information that we have regarding dinosaurs comes from fossils. Fossils can be defined as ancient dead plants and animals or something that was left by them. Entire fossil skeletons of these giant creatures have been unearthed. Though the fact of their existence is undeniable, the time in which they lived and the way in which they became extinct is a matter of much controversy.

Reconstruction's Are Not Easy

While the skeletal remains of dinosaurs have been preserved in rocks, it is not always easy to make an accurate reconstruction of these animals. In other words, the putting together of dinosaur bones is not a simple process.

Often the reconstructions made are from a single leg, bone or tooth which could be badly damaged. There is also the possibility that bones from one dinosaur were mixed in with those from another. This adds to the

confusion of reconstructing these creatures. The conclusion is as much guesswork as it is fact.

Only 40% Of Any Creature Is Known

Even if all the bones were found, there would be only about 40% of the animal left to tell scientists what they originally looked like. We cannot tell the color of the animal or if it was a vegetarian or a meat eater. The presence of sharp teeth tells us only that the food was ripped—not what food was ripped.

Therefore, many of the conclusions of scientists are guesses with respect as to how the dinosaurs lived and behaved.

Consequently, we must be careful about accepting too quickly the artist's reconstructions of these creatures. No picture in any book on dinosaurs is exactly right as to their color, shape, and size.

The Brontosaurus: The Wrong Body With The Wrong Head

One of the most curious stories regarding the reconstruction of dinosaurs is that of the Brontosaurus—probably the most famous of all the dinosaurs. The Brontosaurus was reconstructed when a dinosaur head was placed together with a dinosaur body.

The problem with that reconstruction is that the head and body were found three or four miles apart. Dr. O. C. Marsh, the man who made the original discovery of the head and the body, never reported that they were found apart. He put the two together and named his discovery the “Brontosaurus.”

It has since been discovered that the wrong head was placed with the wrong body! The skeleton actually belonged to one creature—a type of *Diplodocus* while the skull was from another dinosaur—an *Apatosaurus*. The Brontosaurus never existed!

Though millions have seen and heard of the Brontosaurus and though its picture has been in every book on dinosaurs and every museum that reconstructs dinosaurs, this creature did not exist.

When Did They Exist?

A key question with respect to dinosaurs concerns when they lived. The general consensus from modern evolutionary science is that dinosaurs ruled the earth for 140 million years and then died out, for some unknown reason, about 65 million years ago. However, the Bible gives us a different account of these creatures as we will observe in our next few questions.

Summary To Question 16: What Are Dinosaurs?

There are a number of basic things which we should understand about dinosaurs. Dinosaurs or “terrible lizards” are reptiles. They are distinct from modern day reptiles in that they walked with their limbs supporting them.

Evidence from paleontology makes it clear that dinosaurs did once exist on our planet. They ranged in size from smaller than a chicken to eighty tons. The term dinosaur is a relatively new, coined in the 19th century.

Though we know that dinosaurs did exist, there is much still unknown about how they looked. The episode of the Brontosaurus shows the problems that are involved with any dinosaur identification.

Modern evolutionary theory holds that the dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago. Before their demise they roamed the earth for 140 million years.

Question 17

According To The Bible, When Were The Dinosaurs Created?

Although the theory of evolution teaches that all plants and animals came about by natural processes, the Bible says that every creature that exists is a result of the special creation of God. If God created all things, then the dinosaurs were certainly part of that creation. What does the Bible have to say about the creation of dinosaurs?

They Were Created On The Fifth And Sixth Day

The Bible has something to say with respect to the origin of dinosaurs. The first chapter of Genesis tells us that God created all the animals on the fifth and sixth day of creation. The birds and sea creatures were created on “day five.” Scripture says:

Then God said, “Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” So God created the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them: “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” Evening came and then morning: the fifth day (Genesis 1:20-23 CSB).

The land animals were created on “day six:”

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal—livestock, small animals, and wildlife.” And so it was. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to reproduce more of its own kind. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:24,25 NLT).

Therefore, all of the animals which now exist were created on the fifth and sixth day of creation.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Option 1: They Lived At The Same Time As Humans

The Bible says that Adam was created on the sixth day after the land animals had been created. If these were solar days, then human beings were contemporaries of the dinosaurs. Dinosaurs would have had to have lived at the same time as humans because they were part of the animal kingdom created by God.

Adam Named The Dinosaurs

Along with all the other animals, Adam would have named the dinosaurs. The Bible says that Adam named all the animals:

So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names. None of these was the right kind of partner for the man (Genesis 2:19-20 CEV).

If Adam named all of the animals, then he would have had to have named the dinosaurs.

Option 2: They Did Not Live At The Same Time As Humans

If the days in Genesis were not solar days which occurred one after the other, then it is possible that dinosaurs had already become extinct before humanity came on the scene.

This view assumes there was death in the animal world before the fall of humanity as recorded in Genesis chapter 3. Therefore, although dinosaurs would have been created on the fifth and sixth day of creation, they could have died out long before humans were created at the end of the sixth day.

As we mentioned earlier, we do not feel that this view is consistent with all of the biblical evidence.

Are They Mentioned In The Creation Account?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Do we find dinosaurs mentioned in the creation account in Genesis? We know that whether the days in Genesis were solar days or long periods of time, dinosaurs like all the other animals God had created, began to populate the earth after the initial creation. In other words, they lived here upon the earth at some time in the past.

It is possible that we have a reference to dinosaurs in the Genesis creation account. In the first six days of creation, other than human beings, there is no reference to individual species. However, Genesis 1:21 reads as follows:

So God made the giant sea monsters and all the living creatures that swim in the ocean. He also made every kind of bird. God looked at what he had done, and it was good (Genesis 1:21 CEV).

The translation “giant sea monsters” comes from the Hebrew word *tannin*. This word is variously translated as “crocodiles,” “whales,” or “sea-monsters” in English translations. The word *tannin* also appears in Exodus.

At the account of the “Burning Bush,” Moses cast his staff to the ground “and it became a *nabash*.”

The Lord said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it (Exodus 4:3 NIV).

When confronting Pharaoh, Moses again throws down his staff “and it became a *tannin*.”

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake (Exodus 7:10 NIV).

From other places in Scripture, it becomes clear that *nabash* refers to a particular type of animal—a snake. In chapter one of Genesis, only general categories are mentioned. Since *tannin* is used there, it must refer to the general category within which snakes are found. Thus, *tannin* must refer to reptiles.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Thus, it is possible to translate Genesis 1:21 as “And God created large reptiles.” This could refer to the dinosaur-like creatures which lived in the sea.

Why Did God Create Them?

As to the exact reason for the dinosaur’s creation, we are not told. It is possible that the dinosaurs were created to show humankind the great power of the Creator but any conclusion regarding the purpose of the creation of dinosaurs is only speculation.

Summary To Question 17: According To The Bible When Were Dinosaurs Created?

God created the dinosaurs at some time in the past. The Bible says that the birds and sea creatures were created on the fifth day of creation while land animals were created on the sixth day of creation. The dinosaurs would have been included in this creation.

However, there is no agreement among Bible-believers as to when this happened. If the days in Genesis were solar days, which were consecutive, and the creation was recent, then dinosaurs lived at the same time as humans. This would make their creation only a few thousand years ago.

If the days in Genesis, for whatever reason, do not require a recent creation, then it is possible that the dinosaurs died out before humanity came on the scene. This could have been millions of years ago.

Bible-believers are divided on this issue. Yet, as we have emphasized, we believe the evidence is powerful that dinosaurs and humans lived at the same time.

Question 18

What Was The Behemoth? Was It A Dinosaur?

There are a couple of passages in Scripture that may give a specific reference to dinosaurs. These passages are found in the Book of Job and they refer to creatures known as the “Behemoth” and the “Leviathan.” The Bible says the following concerning the behemoth:

Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox. Look at the strength of his loins and the power in the muscles of his belly. He stiffens his tail like a cedar tree; the tendons of his thighs are woven firmly together. His bones are bronze tubes; his limbs are like iron rods. He is the foremost of God’s works; [only] his Maker can draw the sword against him. The hills yield food for him, while all [sorts of] wild animals play there. He lies under the lotus plants, hiding in the protection of marshy reeds. Lotus plants cover him with their shade; the willows by the brook surround him. Though the river rages, Behemoth is unafraid; he remains confident, even if the Jordan surges up to his mouth. Can anyone capture him while he looks on, or pierce his nose with snares? (Job 40:15-24 CSB).

What does this refer to?

This Is Not A Mythological Or Symbolic Creature

While many Bible students think this creature was mythological or merely symbolic, the Bible stresses that this creature was actually created by God. The following reasons show this to be true.

1. In Job 38:39-39:30 there are 12 animals that are mentioned by God. All of these are real creatures. This would indicate that the final two creatures mentioned, the Behemoth and the Leviathan would also be genuine.
2. God told Job to look at the Behemoth (40:15). He could only look at a real creature.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

3. God told Job that He made the Behemoth as He had made humans (40:15).

4. The Bible provides detailed descriptions of the physical characteristics of the Behemoth as well as the Leviathan. This is not consistent with mythological creatures.

Therefore, we are dealing with a real creature, not a mythological one.

The Behemoth Described

The Behemoth is described in some detail. The following things can be ascertained from the description of this creature in Job 40:15-24.

1. It was a grass eater—it was not a carnivore or meat eater.
2. The Behemoth eats grass *like* an ox but is not an ox.
3. Their strength is in their hips and their power is in their stomach muscles.
4. The creature moves its tail like a cedar.
5. The sinews of its thighs are tightly knit.
6. He has large bones like beams of bronze and ribs like bars of iron.
7. The Behemoth is first in the ways of God.
8. Only God can control this creature.
9. The Behemoth visits the mountains along with the other creatures. They all seem to play there.
10. Though the Behemoth is this creature of great strength and size, it lets other beasts play near it without harming them.
11. It lives an inactive life under the lotus tree and in the marsh.
12. It is not disturbed when the river rages.

These things described the behemoth.

What Was It?

If the Behemoth was a genuine creature whom God created, then what exactly was it? A number of suggestions have been offered. They include the following.

1. An Animal Of Unknown Origin

Some commentators state simply that it is an animal of unknown origin. The idea that this is a poetic description of a non-existent animal is also popular among commentators.

2. A Water Ox

The description of the behemoth agrees in part with the hippopotamus, and, in part, with the elephant. However, in all of its details it does not agree exactly with either of these creatures. Therefore, many people assume that the passage is describing an Egyptian water ox.

3. Elephant

There is also the possibility that the Behemoth was an elephant. Certain of the characteristics fit an elephant.

4. Hippopotamus

Many people think the Behemoth refers to the hippopotamus—a creature which was certainly known in biblical times. Indeed, the hippo is a powerful aquatic animal which eats grass. Since it is not a carnivore, other animals would not be afraid of the hippo. Furthermore, there are ancient records of hunting hippos with harpoons and barbed hooks.

5. Is It A Description Of A Dinosaur?

There are some commentators who believe that the Behemoth describes a dinosaur. The idea that the Behemoth was an elephant, or a hippopotamus

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

does not fit all the facts. Neither of these has the tail of a cedar—one of the largest trees in the ancient world.

Therefore, it is argued that the Behemoth was a gigantic plant-eating dinosaur such as the Diplodocus.

Yet this identification is disputed. It is argued that a Diplodocus would hardly be described this way. Among other things, it is argued that a surging river would hardly reach the depth of the mouth of the Diplodocus.

All in all, the exact identity of the Behemoth is unknown.

Summary To Question 18:

What Was The Behemoth? Was It A Dinosaur?

There is a creature mentioned in the Book of Job known as the Behemoth. Its identity is unknown. From its description, it seems to be an animal which actually existed. A number of possible candidates have been proposed.

They include an animal of unknown origin, a water ox, elephant, hippopotamus and a dinosaur.

If it were a dinosaur, then it would have been some similar to the creature to the Diplodocus. Yet no identification is certain.

Question 19

What Was the Leviathan? Was It a Dinosaur?

In the 41st chapter of the Book of Job a large living thing is described by the Lord in His response to Job. This creature is called the “Leviathan.” The passage reads as follows:

Can you pull in Leviathan with a hook or tie his tongue down with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? . . . Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? Lay a hand on him. You will remember the battle and never repeat it! Any hope of capturing him proves false. Does a person not collapse at the very sight of him? No one is ferocious enough to rouse Leviathan; who then can stand against me? (Job 41:1-2,7-10 CSB).

The Leviathan is spoken of as the greatest creature in the sea.

Elsewhere in the Bible, the Leviathan is spoken of as being part of God’s creation. The psalmist wrote the following:

How countless are your works, Lord! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, vast and wide, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. There the ships move about, and Leviathan, which you formed to play there (Psalm 104:24-26 CSB).

While the Leviathan is undoubtedly one of the fiercest creatures that the God of the Bible had made, its identity is unclear. What sort of creature was the Leviathan? Many answers have been given. They include the following.

Crocodile

A popular view is that the Leviathan was a crocodile. The word Leviathan means “the twisted animal.” To many people, this seems an apt description of the crocodile.

Dinosaur

There are some students of Scripture who believe the Leviathan is a dinosaur-like creature. Indeed, this animal is described as the greatest creature of the sea.

Furthermore, there are a number of things spoken about this creature which seems to rule out a crocodile or some type of known fish.

For one thing, it was useless to try and catch the leviathan with hooks. This is because nothing on earth was its equal. The large size, strong jaws, great teeth, fast swimming ability and its protected back and undersides all give clues as to its identity. This was one of the greatest animals ever to swim the seas. It may have been a true dinosaur.

Some people believe it can be identified with an ancient sea creature known as the *kronosaurus*. Yet, its exact identity cannot be known with any certainty.

Not All Agree That The Behemoth And Leviathan Are Dinosaurs

Thus, we see that among students of Scripture there are a variety of ways that these two references have been interpreted. In fact, there are a number of Bible students who insist that calling the Behemoth and the Leviathan “dinosaurs” is the wrong way of understanding what is being said in Job. They do not believe that Job is trying to tell us that he and his contemporaries could actually see living dinosaurs.

Whatever the case may be, the exact identity of these creatures is uncertain.

Summary To Question 19: What Was The Leviathan? Was It A Dinosaur?

In Scripture, there is a creature referred to as the Leviathan. It is called the greatest creature of the sea. Its identification is not certain. Some believe it refers to a crocodile or some similar type of creature.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Others, however, argue that the Leviathan was actually a dinosaur. It has been contended what the Bible describes is a creature known as a *kronosaurus*.

Yet there is no way to be certain of this identification. Furthermore, many Bible students do not think Job is actually referring to a dinosaur in his description of the leviathan.

Question 20

What Happened To the Dinosaurs?

While dinosaurs once roamed on the earth, for some reason they are no longer alive. As to what happened to them there are a number of possible answers.

The theory of evolution holds that dinosaurs lived during the Mesozoic Era—roughly 230 million to 65 million years ago on their time scale. At the end of the Cretaceous Period of the Mesozoic Era they died out. Among evolutionary scientists there is no consensus of opinion with respect as to why they died out.

Evolutionary Views As To What Happened To The Dinosaurs

The most popular evolutionary views as to what happened to the dinosaurs include the following:

1. A comet struck the earth killing all the dinosaurs.
2. A giant meteor crashed into the sea. This sent a great tidal wave throughout the earth and drowned most of the dinosaurs.
3. The sun became too hot for dinosaurs to exist.
4. The sun became too cold to support dinosaur life.
5. The climate of the world became too dry.
6. The world's climate was too wet.
7. The magnetic field of earth reversed and killed most of the dinosaurs.
8. A supernova exploded near the earth sending radiation throughout our planet.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

This is but a small sample of the many theories which the secular scientists have adopted to explain the demise of the dinosaurs. There is no consensus of opinion. There are a number of unexplained problems no matter what theory one adopts.

What Does the Bible Say?

Among Bible-believers there are a number of possible answers to this question. They include the following:

Option 1: They Perished Before Humans Existed

There are Christians who believe and teach that the dinosaurs perished before the creation of humanity. They contend that dinosaurs roamed the earth millions of years before God created humans. For some unexplained reason, they died out before humankind was created. Therefore, dinosaurs were never seen by human beings.

Those holding this view would include individuals who hold the age/day concept of the universe or those who do not see the Bible teaching anything with respect to science.

In addition, those who hold to the Gap Theory argue that the dinosaurs are fossils from a previous creation that existed before that which is recorded in Genesis. We explain each of these theories in detail in our book *The Days of Genesis 1, The Age of the Earth, and the Extent of the Flood of Noah*.

Option 2: They Died After The Fall But Before The Flood

Another possibility is that the dinosaurs existed at the same time as Adam but died out before the Flood of Noah. For this reason, there were no dinosaurs taken upon the ark.

Option 3: They Perished In a Universal Flood

Some feel that the dinosaurs were not taken aboard the ark. For some unspoken reason, they were allowed to perish in the Flood. Several possibilities have been suggested.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

First, God knew that fear and dread of human beings would be placed in all the animals after the Flood. Because of their tremendous size, Noah and his descendants would not have been able to deal with them if they became hostile.

Dinosaurs were tropical in nature. If the temperature extremes did not occur until after the Flood the environment would have been hostile to these creatures. Knowing all of this, God in His wisdom did not allow them to be taken upon the ark.

Option 4: They Survived The Flood

It is also possible that dinosaurs survived the Flood. There are two ways in which this could have happened.

They Could Have Survived A Geographically Local Flood

There is the possibility that the dinosaurs, if still existing, would have not been affected by a local Flood. Those that hold this view would argue that the dinosaurs perished for some other reason than a universal Flood.

They May Have Been Taken On Board The Ark

It is also possible that Noah took two of each kind of dinosaur with him on the ark.

Since the Bible is clear that there were two of each kind of animal taken upon the ark, this would include dinosaurs. Some people have argued that because the dinosaurs were such large creatures they would have never fit inside the ark.

However, they do not realize that most of the dinosaurs were rather small. Most of the publicity regarding dinosaurs have been given to a few of the larger kinds such as Tyrannosaurus Rex. Even the largest dinosaurs were not as large as the blue whale.

If the dinosaurs were taken upon the ark they were, most likely, young adults rather than fully grown creatures—seeing that the creatures that were in the ark were there to repopulate the earth.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Therefore, any animal taken upon the ark had to be at a place in their life where they could still reproduce. There would have been sufficient room in the ark for two of each dinosaur.

All Life Was Destroyed, The Geography Was Changed

The Scripture says that the waters of the Flood killed every living creature on the face of the earth including, of course, all the dinosaurs. The sediments would have buried many of them rapidly. The massive fossil graveyards give testimony to the flooding.

In addition, the geography of the earth changed. Seventy per cent of the earth's surface is still covered with water. All previous geographical sites were destroyed including the Garden of Eden. Mountains were formed where there was none.

The Fossils Are A Reminder Of God's Judgment

Dinosaur fossils can serve as a reminder that God judged the world in the past. The remnants of Noah's Flood remind us that God is both the Creator and Judge of dinosaurs.

Did They Survive After The Flood?

There is the possibility that certain types of dinosaurs existed for quite some time after the Flood. Since the beginning of recorded history, there have been many stories of "dragons."

The stories and the pictures people have left behind testify to the existence of unusual reptile-like creatures. Many of the ancient descriptions of dragons' sound like an encounter with a dinosaur. Legends are usually based on some degree of fact rather than just simple imagination. The fact that the dragon stories are widespread all over the world lends credibility to the fact that these people actually saw dinosaur-like animals.

They Became Extinct

Over a period of time, the dinosaurs did become extinct. This could have happened after the Flood due to a number of factors.

1. Temperature Extremes

One cause for their demise could have been the changes in the temperature. Temperatures became more extreme. Many parts of the world became hotter after the Flood while other parts became much cooler. Because the dinosaurs needed a tropical climate to exist, they would have been limited to where they could have lived. In some parts of the globe, a short “ice age” may have followed the Flood.

2. There Were Other Catastrophic Events

It is possible that other catastrophes, apart from the Flood, contributed to the demise of dinosaurs. This may account for their extinction.

3. Lack Of Food

If there was only a small geographical area in which dinosaurs could exist this would cause a struggle to find enough food to survive. The huge great forests that once existed were no longer there. Lack of food may have contributed to their extinction.

4. The Atmospheric Protection Was Gone

In addition, harmful radiation from the sun and space probably affected them. The world before the Flood may have been protected by a water vapor canopy that kept harmful radiation from reaching the planet. This canopy, the “windows of heaven,” was released at the Flood.” However, the existence of this canopy is not clearly taught in Scripture.

5. Their Habitats Were Destroyed

The world that existed after the Flood could have seen destruction of some of the dinosaur habitats. Therefore, they would have existed for a time and then eventually died out.

Perhaps ancient reports of dragons are referring to dinosaurs which were still living at the same time as early human beings. The evidence is uncertain.

6. They Were Hunted By Humanity

The hunting, by human beings, would have also caused the extinction of the dinosaurs. The mammoths and mastodons were wiped out by hunters. People in ancient times could have also killed the dinosaurs for food, or possibly for sport.

As to the exact cause of their extinction no one knows. It is a fact that a number of animals still become extinct each year.

Summary To Question 20: What Happened To The Dinosaurs?

The great dinosaurs that once roamed earth are now extinct. As to why, no one knows. Evolutionary scientists pose a number of theories—none of which can be proven.

The Bible does not specifically say what happened to the dinosaurs. There are a number of possibilities. It is impossible to be certain which theory is correct.

Question 21

Is It Possible That Dinosaurs Are Alive Today?

We come to the question, “Is it possible that dinosaurs still live today?” Several modern reports lend possible credence to this idea. Yet nothing has been specifically proven.

A Supposed Dinosaur Discovery Off Of New Zealand

Indeed, not all reports of “dinosaurs” finds have proven to be true. We earlier mentioned a case in point—the so-called discovery of the carcass of a sea creature thought to be extinct—the plesiosaur.

On April 10, 1977, near Christchurch New Zealand, a Japanese fishing boat named the Zuiyo Maru brought up from 900 feet of water a decayed body of a creature that was initially claimed to be a dinosaur-like creature that was supposedly long since extinct—a plesiosaur. Photographs and tissue samples of the creature were taken but the carcass itself was thrown back into the sea because of the smell and decay.

The creature was 32 feet long, weighed approximately 4,000 pounds and had four fins which were approximately three feet in length. Since it is impossible to think that only one of these creatures has survived on its own, people came to the obvious conclusion that other of these plesiosaurs must still exist. Worldwide attention was given to this “dinosaur find.” Many creationists used this find as evidence against evolution.

It Was Not A Dinosaur

However, later evidence has shown that this find was not of a plesiosaur but actually another type of sea creature called a “basking shark.”

Consequently, the find in New Zealand was not that of an authentic dinosaur-like animal that had been assumed to be extinct.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

This episode teaches us a valuable lesson. We need to wait until all the evidence is in before we claim to have found something that backs up Scripture.

There Is No Incontrovertible Evidence That They Still Exist

There are other similar reports which have been reported in the media. However, none of them have proven to be true.

Therefore, there is no compelling evidence that dinosaurs are alive today.

Summary To Question 21:

Is It Possible That Dinosaurs Are Alive Today?

There have been reports of dinosaurs in both ancient and modern times. Some of them, such as the “discovery” of a recently dead plesiosaur off of the coast of New Zealand have turned out to be false.

However, this does not necessarily mean that all reports of dinosaur sightings are mistakes or hoaxes.

It seems that all we can say is that there is no incontrovertible evidence that any of them still exist in our modern world.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Part 3

Scientific Issues in Scripture

Dealing with Scientific Questions and Problems

This last section will consider a number of common questions, as well as problems, with respect to the Bible and its relationship to science. These are the usual questions that arise whenever the subject of Scripture and science is addressed.

Question 22

Does the Bible Make Unscientific Statements?

The Bible was written in what is termed the “pre-scientific” era, before the rise of modern science. Many books and articles have been written that accuse the Bible of giving scientifically inaccurate statements. The conclusion is that the Bible cannot be the divine Word of God because of these inaccuracies.

Yet, the Bible, if it is the Word of God, should be accurate when it touches upon the areas of science and nature. While it is obvious that the Bible is not a scientific textbook in the sense of giving detailed technical scientific descriptions of our universe, this is not a sufficient reason for questioning the accuracy of those parts of Scripture which do deal with the natural world.

Indeed, the Bible is not a textbook on history either. Yet, when it mentions things that can be historically verified, we expect it to be accurate. In the same manner, the Bible is not a textbook of modern science but when it refers to things that can be checked by science, it should be accurate in all that it says.

Certain statements made in Scripture seem to be unscientific at first glance. A closer inspection of the evidence, however, will reveal that these supposed errors come from either a lack of understanding of what the Bible is attempting to say or what science has actually proven.

The Main Question: What Did The Author Intend To Say?

The real question comes down to the intent of the biblical author. Was he attempting to teach something specific about our natural world or was his purpose something else?

To answer this question each statement must be considered in its context. We must first determine if that person is actually speaking for God or speaking from his own insights. The Bible contains the speech of hundreds of different people and not all of them were speaking for God.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Indeed, in the Book of Job, we have the recorded speeches of Job and his friends. After they had spoken back and forth the Lord Himself interrupted the conversation with these words to Job:

Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words (Job 38:1,2 CSB).

The Lord called Job's words, "ignorant." The translation, God's Word, puts it this way:

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. "Who is this that belittles my advice with words that do not show any knowledge about it?" (Job 38:1,2 God's Word)

According to the Lord, the discussions of Job and his friends consisted of "ignorant statements" or "words which did not show any knowledge" about the subjects they discussed.

The Lord then asked Job a number of specific questions about the nature of our world as well as the universe. These were questions neither Job nor his friends could possibly answer.

The Question Rephrased

This being the case, we should probably rephrase the question we are trying to answer. If we ask the question does the Bible contain unscientific statements or statements ignorant about our natural world, the answer would be "Yes." The statements in Job, by he, as well as his friends, are according to the Lord, "ignorant statements."

But this is not the issue. The issue is this, "Do the biblical writers, when claiming to speak for the Lord, make specific statements that wrongly teach us about science and nature?" This is the real question which needs to be answered.

Therefore, we must first discover whether the particular statement recorded in Scripture is actually meant to be understood as God speaking to us. If the statement does come directly from God, or from one of His prophets, we then attempt to determine exactly what he was trying to say.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Consequently, before we start analyzing individual statements in Scripture, to determine whether or not they have something specific to say about the natural world, we must make certain God is speaking and that He is trying to teach us something specific.

There Are Two Mistakes To Avoid

Therefore, the main issue in determining if the Bible is actually making a scientific statement concerns the intent of the author. We must determine exactly what the author was attempting to say before we conclude whether or not the statement matches known scientific facts.

When attempting to determine the intent of the authors of Scripture in their statements about the natural world, there are two mistakes we need to avoid. They are as follows:

Mistake 1: We Not Should Explain References In Scripture In Light Of Modern Science

First, we should not assume that the biblical writers are attempting to give us technical scientific information. It is not their purpose to teach us the intricate specifics of science.

Therefore, we should not read the statements about our universe in light of how we understand them in our modern world. Rather we should interpret these statements as the people in the ancient world would have understood them. We need to interpret them from their perspective. What would it have meant to them?

Mistake 2: We Should Not Assume The Biblical Writers Made The Same Mistakes As Their Contemporaries

As we interpret references to science and nature, we should be careful not to use modern categories or our modern understanding of the universe to interpret these references.

However, there is another mistake, that is often made, which we also do not need to make. We do not want to assume that because all ancient

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

peoples looked at the universe in a certain way, the biblical writers, of necessity, also saw the universe in the same way.

In other words, because the ancients had primitive and unscientific concepts of the world, we should not assume that the writers of Scripture necessarily held to the same concepts.

Instead, we need to discover, the best which we can, what the various texts actually say in context without deciding ahead of time what the writers did or did not know.

If God divinely revealed something to them about the natural world, then whatever they spoke or wrote would be correct. God would not tell His people something which was untrue.

On the other hand, if the Bible records someone speaking from their own limited perspective, then we should not assume their statement is meant to be scientifically accurate. It may be, it may not be. The context must decide this issue.

Therefore, we can conclude that the Bible will not make unscientific statements when the speaker is either God or one of His spokesmen who is speaking directly for Him—they will not be in error.

However, the record of the speech of others is not guaranteed to be scientifically accurate or for that matter even correct. The context must always decide the issue. This makes absolutely essential the serious study of these passages relating to science and nature.

Summary To Question 22

Does The Bible Make Unscientific Statements?

Over and over again we hear the phrase, “the Bible is not a textbook of modern science.” Supposedly this means that the Bible is either unscientific or inaccurate when speaking of things pertaining to science.

However, this is not the case. The God of the Bible is the God of truth. If He revealed some information to His people which touched upon the areas of science or nature that revelation would be correct. God does not lie!

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Yet the real issue is determining the intent of the biblical author. Did he intend to teach us something of a scientific nature? Since the Bible records the speech of hundreds of people, and not all of them were speaking for God, we must first determine who is speaking and if their speech is supposed to be teaching us some divine truth.

If this is the case, then what specifically is the writer intending to teach? If we conclude that the writer did intend to say something about the nature of our earth or universe, then we must avoid making one of two common mistakes.

First, we should not try to explain the passage in light of modern knowledge—we should not place our understanding of the earth and the universe as the starting point of our interpretation of the text. Instead, we should attempt to understand what it would have meant to the people at that time. It is wrong to try to place statements in Scripture into modern scientific categories and expect the writers to use modern scientific language.

The other extreme to avoid is to assume that the biblical writers were as ignorant as their contemporaries in scientific matters. This is not necessarily the case. Because they used some of the same terms as those living at that time in history does not mean they shared the same superstitions.

We do not know how much God specifically revealed to His people about the nature of the universe. He may have given them some insights into the world in which He created—certain insights which are not recorded in Scripture. We just do not know.

Therefore, we must be extremely careful about any conclusions we make as to whether or not a statement in Scripture is meant to be understood as a specific reference to a scientific matter.

Question 23

Does Scripture Teach That The Sky Is A Solid Dome? (Firmament)

Non-Christians often condemn the Bible as teaching a faulty view of the universe. One example which is frequently cited is the claim that the Hebrew word *raqiya*, which is found in the first chapter of Genesis and other places in Scripture, teaches that the sky is actually a solid dome.

This, it is argued, shows the unscientific and uniformed view which the biblical writers had concerning the nature of the solar system. The evidence for this is usually given as follows:

Accusation 1: The First Chapter Of Genesis Says The Sky Is Solid

To begin with, the first chapter of Genesis speaks of the sky being a solid dome. The *King James Version* translates the *raqiya* as “firmament,” meaning something solid. It reads:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day (Genesis 1:6-8 KJV).

Other translations also assume this is speaking of something solid. The Contemporary English Version reads:

God said, “I command a dome to separate the water above it from the water below it.” And that’s what happened. God made the dome and named it “Sky.” Evening came and then morning—that was the second day (Genesis 1:6-8 CEV).

Therefore, it is asserted that Scripture sees some sort of a solid dome that encased the earth. This would make the Scripture guilty of a scientific error.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Unhappily, some Christians continue to advance this same argument about the Bible and science. They believe that the writers of Scripture did err in their scientific observations, but they claim it has nothing to do with the authority of Scripture.

Accusation 2: Israel, Like All The Ancients, Believed The Sky Was Solid

The idea that the Hebrews believed, that the sky was a solid dome, fits with the views of their contemporaries. From an examination of ancient writings, there seems to be the near unanimous conclusion that the sky was something solid.

This being the case, why should we assume that the Hebrews held a differing view? Therefore, it is contended that we should assume that the original readers of the Book of Genesis understood the *raqiya* to be something solid.

Accusation 3: The Sky Is Pictured As A Heavy Metal Mirror

Further support of this idea is supposedly found in the Book of Job. Here we also find the sky pictured as something solid—a heavy metal mirror. The Bible says:

Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a cast metal mirror?
(Job 37:18 ESV)

This further illustrates that the Hebrews believed the sky was something solid. The *raqiya* is viewed as something solid which has been spread out by beating.

Response To The Idea That The Sky Was A Solid Dome

There are a number of ways in which we can respond to the accusation that the Bible teaches the sky is actually a solid dome. They include the following.

1. The Exact Meaning Of The Hebrew Term *Raqiya* Is Uncertain

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The idea that Genesis clearly teaches a domed sky does not fit the facts. While it is argued that *raqiya* is a term that specifically refers to something which is solid, this is not the case. In fact, the exact meaning of the term is uncertain. It is a word which is rarely used in the Hebrew Old Testament and it covers a broad range of meanings.

Thus, all of these reconstructions concerning what the Hebrews believed about the nature of the universe based upon the term *raqiya* are basically meaningless because of the uncertainty about this word.

Since *raqiya* is not a specific term referring to some solid dome above the earth, the word can be understood in a number of ways. For example, many Bible translations translate the word as “expanse:”

And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day (Genesis 1:6-8 ESV).

This does not give the idea of something solid. This translation sees it as representing the atmosphere or some concept similar to it.

Thus, while it is possible to understand *raqiya* as a solid dome, it is also possible to understand it to refer to the atmosphere or something similar. We know that the main purpose of the Genesis creation account was certainly not to scientifically describe the nature of the sky but rather to emphasize that the God of Scripture is the Creator of all things.

Therefore, Moses, the author of this portion of Scripture, merely used the common term everyone used at that time to describe the sky—a term which could have had a number of different meanings.

The Viewpoints Of Other Nations Are Not Relevant

While those who insist the Bible sees the sky as something solid point to the neighbors of ancient Israel to support this idea, there are a number of things wrong with doing this.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

First, there was not just one ancient view of the sky. We should not think that every nation in antiquity held the exact same view as to the nature of the sky and its relationship to the earth. They did not.

Furthermore, the Old Testament teaches numerous things contrary to the views of the nations which surrounded Israel. Indeed, Israel was distinct from these nations in so many of their beliefs and practices.

Therefore, even if these nations usually viewed the dome as solid does not mean the Bible portrays it that way. The Bible is God's revelation to humanity—it is not the superstitious beliefs of ancient humanity.

3. The Statement About The Sky Being A Heavy Mirror Is Made By Elihu, Not God

As far as the idea that the sky is compared to a solid mirror in Job 37:18, there are a number of responses we can make. To begin with, the speaker Elihu—it is not God.

Later in the Book of Job, the Lord made the following comment on the thoughts of Job and his friends. It is as follows:

From out of a storm, the Lord said to Job: Why do you talk so much when you know so little? Now get ready to face me! Can you answer the questions I ask? How did I lay the foundation for the earth? Were you there? (Job 38:1-4 CEV).

The New English Translation puts it this way:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this who darkens counsel with words without knowledge? Get ready for a difficult task like a man; I will question you and you will inform me! "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you possess understanding! (Job 38:1-4 NET).

Therefore, if the statement made by Elihu suggested that the sky was some sort of solid object it does not really matter. The Lord called these types of statements "ignorant words."

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

However, there is another possible way of looking at this. The word translated “mirror” is only found here in the Hebrew Bible. In addition, this particular word is not found in other languages similar to Hebrew. We are uncertain of its meaning.

Furthermore, the word translated “skies” in this verse is the Hebrew word *shabaq*. The main meaning of the word is “dust” or “cloud.” Sky is only a secondary meaning.

With these things in mind, we can get an entirely different understanding of this verse.

For example, the Contemporary English Version translates the passage this way:

God can spread out the clouds to get relief from the heat, but can you?
(Job 37:18 CEV)

They see the word referring to the clouds not the skies. In this understanding of the verse, Elihu is commenting how God is able to spread out the clouds to cover the sun—something that Job cannot do.

The New Living Translation sees it a different way. It says.

He makes the skies reflect the heat like a giant mirror. Can you do that?
(Job 37:18 NLT)

This translation understands Elihu to say that the sky reflects heat like a mirror—not that the sky is actually solid as a mirror.

Consequently, the statement of Elihu should not be used to prove that the sky was viewed by the ancients as something solid object like a mirror. This does not seem to be what he was trying to say.

4. It Is Possible That Genesis Was Handed Down To From Earlier Sources

Another way to respond to this accusation concerns the possibility that Genesis was handed down to Moses in some previous written form.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Indeed, some have argued that the creation account may go all the way back to Adam himself. If this is the case, then the “original” meaning of the Hebrew term would *not* have referred to the sky as a solid dome.

Possibly, somewhere in history this idea became corrupted and the sky began to be viewed as a dome. The fact that the ancients corrupted the original meaning of the term merely illustrates the results of their sinful rebellion against God and their lack of appreciating what God has taught about the nature of the world. In other words, they created their own accounts of what happened in the beginning.

If this is what happened, then the argument would end here. However, the problem is that we do not know for certain if Moses actually received the Genesis creation account from a previously written source or that he composed it himself.

5. God Did Not Deceive His People

What we cannot conclude from this passage is that the writer of Genesis, Moses, made a scientific error which was divinely inspired and ordained by God. This idea is that God somehow accommodated to the ignorance of the people living at the time. Since they all supposedly believed the sky was solid, God did not attempt to change their superstitious beliefs but rather accommodated to their ignorance and described the sky in the same way as they understood it—as a solid dome.

However, once we start doing this there is really no place to stop. How do we know that anything which the Scripture teaches is not merely an accommodation to the ignorant beliefs of the ancients? Every statement in Scripture immediately begins to be suspect. This robs the Bible of its authority.

Again, we come back to the issue of the intent of the author. What was he trying to say? Why did he use these particular words and phrases in describing God’s creation? What exactly was he trying to teach us about the nature of the universe?

As we have stressed, the main purpose of the author is to emphasize that the God of the Bible, and no one else, is the Creator of all things and all

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

things are subject to His power and authority. There is no doubt about this. As far as what else the Scriptures are trying to teach us in this passage in Genesis, there are legitimate differences of opinion.

Summary To Question 23

Does Scripture Teach That The Sky Is A Solid Dome? (Firmament)

The Bible speaks of God creating something on “day two” of creation which separated the waters below from the waters above. There is a difference of opinion as to exactly what the author, Moses, is referring to.

A number of Bible translations translate the Hebrew word as “firmament” or “dome.” This indicates that the Hebrews believed that the sky was in some sense solid. Since this view of the sky was seemingly held by all peoples of the ancient world, it is assumed that the biblical writers held the same unscientific view.

Yet this is the wrong way to go about interpreting the passage. To begin with, this passage in Genesis may have been handed down to Moses in written form—possibly from Adam himself. If this is the case, then the world would have originally meant something like “sky” or “atmosphere.” It was only later, that sinful people, opposed to the one true God, brought a different meaning to the term with their own pagan accounts of origins. In other words, the original meaning of the term became corrupted by unbelievers.

There is something else to be considered. The fact that the author of Genesis used a word that could mean something solid does not mean that this is what he had in mind. Indeed, the word used, as well as the description given, is sufficiently vague to the place where it could mean a number of things.

In fact, Moses was merely using the popular term used at that time to describe the sky—a term which could have a variety of meanings. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that Moses had the same unscientific view of the world as his contemporaries by the use of this particular Hebrew word.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

It is possible that for the benefit of the people Moses may be simply explaining what God did in the beginning from the vantage point of one here upon the earth without attempting to place any specific meaning on the term.

Therefore, Moses is merely explaining what God did in a way which the people would understand without trying to give any specific or technical scientific explanation about the sky. This was not the purpose of his statement.

Any one of these answers is possible. Therefore, nobody should insist that the use of the term *raqiya* constitutes a scientific error in Scripture.

Question 24

Does The Bible Teach That The Earth Is the Immovable Center Of The Universe? (Geocentrism)

One of the most common claims against the Bible's divine inspiration is that it portrays the earth as the immovable center of the solar system. This is also known as geo-centrism. Since we know that the sun, not the earth, is the center of our solar system, such claims about the earth are unscientific. Does this mean the biblical writers held an unscientific view of the universe?

Passages Which Seem To Say The Earth Is The Immovable Center Of All Things

There are a number of passages which seem to teach the earth is the center of all things.

We read in Chronicles about how the earth is immovable. The writer says:

He has fixed the earth firm, immovable (1 Chronicles 16:30 KJV).

The psalmist also wrote about the earth being immovable and firm:

Thou hast fixed the earth immovable and firm (Psalm 93:1 KJV).

Again, we read in Psalms about the immovable earth. He wrote:

He has fixed the earth firm, immovable (Psalm 96:10 KJV).

In still another reference in the Psalms it speaks of the unshakable foundation of the earth. He wrote it as follows:

Thou didst fix the earth on its foundation so that it never can be shaken (Psalm 104:5 KJV).

In the Book of Isaiah, we read the following of the work of the Lord:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Who made the earth and fashioned it, and himself fixed it fast (Isaiah 45:18 KJV).

It is claimed that these passages clearly teach an immovable earth. Thus, to the people of Israel the earth was the immovable center of the universe.

The Sun Rises And Sets

We can add to this the passages in Scripture which speak of the sun rising and setting. For example, we read in Exodus of the sun “rising:”

But if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed (Exodus 22:3 NIV).

In Deuteronomy, it speaks of the sun “setting:”

Sacrifice the Passover animal only at the place where the Lord your God chooses to have his name dwell. Do this in the evening as the sun sets at the same time of day you departed from Egypt (Deuteronomy 16:6 CSB).

Since the sun neither rises nor sets we have an unscientific description of the solar system. How can this come from an all-knowing God who created the universe? Does this not indicate that the Bible has an unscientific outlook on the way our world functions?

Scripture Gives The Viewpoint Of An Observer Not A Scientific Explanation

As for these so-called scientific “blunders” and “inaccuracies” found in the Bible, we make the following observations.

First, those critics who contend that the people in the ancient world, including the writers of the Bible, held such erroneous views as a flat earth, that the earth was the true center of the universe, that the sun actually rises and sets, as well as the moon self-generates its own light, make the mistake of assuming that statements which are made by observation are attempting to state scientific facts.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

In fact, the Bible was written for people of all ages and all places. In other words, it was not composed to give technical scientific explanations for twenty-first century humanity. However, there is an unfortunate tendency to accuse the Bible of being unscientific because it uses non-scientific language.

What we have in Scripture is the language of appearance. Indeed, from our perspective here upon the earth the sun appears to rise and set. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that it does indeed do these things.

Consequently, the idea that the earth is somehow the immovable physical center of the universe is not taught in Scripture. The biblical writers spoke of things as they appear from the vantage point of an observer.

We Still Speak Like This Today

We should also note that modern humanity speaks of these things in the same way. For example, how many of us hear our local television weather report state that “the rotation of the earth on its axis will move out of our area and out of direct sunlight at 6:30 this evening?”

On the contrary, the common report is that “Sunset tonight will be at 6:30.” The critic has a tendency to place greater restrictions on the language of the Bible than he does on himself and those around him. To do so is unfair, and ultimately, it is unscientific.

Therefore, the charge that the biblical writers were unscientific in their descriptions of the earth and its relationship to the sun is unfair since we ourselves still use words and phrases of the same sort. From our natural viewpoint, here upon the earth the sun does rise in the morning, move across the sky during the day and set in the evening. If people describe it the same way today without being charged of unscientific statements, then why can't the biblical writers?

The Earth Is The Center In God's Plan

Having said all of this, there is another truth about the earth that the Scripture clearly makes. The Bible teaches that the earth is the *central planet* in God's universe. This is not due to its physical position among the various

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

planets, but rather to its place in God's ultimate plan and purpose for the universe which He alone created.

In fact, it is on this one planet—earth—where the living God has chosen to work out His eternal plan. Therefore, our earth does indeed have a special place in the universe which the Lord created.

Everything In The Universe Is In Reference To The Earth

There is something else which we must consider. The Book of Genesis emphasizes that the earth was actually created three days before the sun, moon, and stars. They were not made until the fourth day of creation. Therefore, any purposes which these stars may have are directly related to the earth.

We are also told that the sun, moon, and stars provide for us a system by which we can measure days and years—a calendar system for those living upon the earth. In the first chapter of Genesis it says:

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years" (Genesis 1:14 NIV).

Again, these heavenly bodies only have meaning in reference to the earth.

We are also told that these celestial bodies declare God's glory to humanity. The psalmist wrote:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Psalm 19:1 NIV).

The glory of God is proclaimed to those here on earth by the various heavenly bodies.

God Came To Our Planet

Furthermore, the earth is also the one planet in which God became a human being. Scripture says of Jesus:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14 NIV).

The living God walked among us on planet earth in the Person of Jesus Christ. One day, He will again return to this planet and set up His kingdom. Again, the emphasis is what God is doing here upon the earth.

Finally, the Bible also says that there is a constant battle in the unseen world concerning those of us who live on this one planet. Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

Far from being insignificant, our earth is truly the spiritual center of the universe. This is why the Scripture puts such an emphasis on the planet earth. In this sense, it is the immovable center of the universe!

Summary To Question 24

Does The Bible Teach That The Earth Is The Immovable Center Of The Universe? (Geocentrism)

It has been claimed that the authors of Scripture believed that the earth was the immovable center of the solar system. This is also known as geocentrism. Passages are cited to prove that the biblical writers did not know the earth was circling around the sun but rather everything was revolving around the earth.

However, this accusation against the biblical writers is the wrong way to look at the evidence. For one thing, the writers are writing from the perspective of an observer here upon the earth. They are merely recording the movement of the sun and the planets from the way we see them. They are not meant to be scientific statements of where the earth sits in our solar system.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Furthermore, when the Bible does teach that the earth is immovable, we must ask the question, “In what sense is it speaking about the earth?” Scripture is emphasizing that the earth is in the center of God’s plan. His divine will concerning our planet cannot be stopped by anything.

Therefore, the earth is immovable in that sense. He has set a plan for our planet that will eventually come to pass. In doing so, there are no forces in the universe that can halt His plan. This is what the biblical writers are teaching.

In sum, to attempt to make statements about God’s dealings with our world as some sort of scientific explanation as to how the earth functions in our solar system is looking at the question in the wrong way.

Question 25

Does the Bible Teach a Flat Earth? (The Earth Has Four Literal Corners)

Among the unscientific things which the Bible is accused of teaching is that of a “flat earth.” Three main arguments are usually given.

First, the nations around ancient Israel believed the earth was flat. Second, the Bible speaks of the earth having four corners. Finally, a number of passages in Scripture can only be understood by assuming the earth was flat. The evidence is as follows.

The Nations Around Israel Supposedly Believed In A Flat Earth

Ancient Israel lived in a world where people had primitive views of the earth and its place in our solar system. One of the views which was seemingly universally held is that the earth is flat—not spherical.

Therefore, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, we should assume ancient Israel also believed in a flat earth.

The Bible Says The Earth Has Four Corners

As we look at the Bible, we do find evidence that Israel believed the same as its neighbors—the earth was indeed flat. One of the arguments to support this idea is the expression found in Scripture, “the four corners of the earth” or the “four quarters of the earth. We read the following in the Book of Isaiah:

He will lift up a banner for the nations and gather the dispersed of Israel; he will collect the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12 CSB).

Some translations say the “four quarters:”

He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth (Isaiah 11:12 NIV).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The fact that ancient Israel believed the earth had “four corners” is another indication that they considered it to be flat.

Other Passages Are Supposedly Consistent With A Flat Earth

There are other passages which can only be understood in light of the belief in a flat earth. For example, we read the following in Daniel:

In the visions of my mind as I was lying in bed, I saw this: There was a tree in the middle of the earth, and it was very tall. The tree grew large and strong; its top reached to the sky, and it was visible to the ends of the earth (Daniel 4:10,11 CSB).

Only if the entire earth was considered to be flat, could a suitably tall tree be visible to “the ends of the whole earth.” However, this would not be possible if the earth was a sphere.

In describing the temptation of Jesus by Satan, the Bible alludes to a flat earth. Matthew writes:

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor (Matthew 4:8 CSB).

It would not be possible to view all of the kingdoms of the world from a high mountain unless the earth was flat.

In the Book of Revelation, we read the following:

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So, it is to be. Amen. (Revelation 1:7 CSB).

This could only be true if the earth was flat. Every eye in the world could not, at the same time, see someone coming to earth.

Therefore, it is argued that the combined evidence from Scripture and our knowledge of the beliefs of the ancients assure us that ancient Israel had an unscientific view of our earth—they believed it was flat.

Response To The Flat Earth Idea

There are a number of responses which we can make to the idea of a flat earth. They are as follows:

1. The Views Of Other Nations Are Not Relevant

Whether all of the nations around Israel believed in a flat earth is not relevant. All of the nations also believed in and worshipped many gods—something ancient Israel did not do. Therefore, the beliefs and practices of other nations are not relevant to the situation with ancient Israel.

However, we should not necessarily assume that the ancients universally believed that the earth was flat. They had plenty of indications that the earth was spherical from merely observing nature.

For example, they could easily view the sun and the moon and observe that neither of these celestial bodies was flat. The fact that the sun and the moon were obviously spherical would likely be used as a comparison to our own planet.

Indeed, we know that the spherical shape of the earth was the obvious conclusion drawn by those who watched ships sail in and out of port. As the ship sailed toward the horizon it would gradually disappear from view and as it returned the mast would always be seen first.

Therefore, we should not assume that all of the ancients automatically assumed the earth was flat—they did not.

2. The Expression Four Corners Is Not To Be Understood Literally

The idea that the earth is spoken of as having four corners does not mean that the earth is a quadrangle. It is a figure of speech referring to the four points of the horizon—north, south, east, and west. In fact, today we still speak of the four corners of the earth to indicate the directions.

There is something else. The same prophet, Isaiah, who spoke of the four corners of the earth in another place shows properly that the earth is round. He wrote:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

God is enthroned above the circle of the earth; its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like thin cloth and spreads them out like a tent to live in (Isaiah 40:22 CSB).

Here the earth is likened to a circle.

In the Book of Job, probably one of the oldest books in Scripture, we read the following:

He stretches the northern skies over empty space; he hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7 CSB).

Job seems to be viewing the earth as spherical, not flat.

3. Daniel Does Not Teach The Entire World Was Flat

The passage in Daniel, which is used to teach the biblical writers believed in a flat earth, does nothing of the sort. The passage does not specifically say that the tree could be seen throughout the entire earth. It can be translated in this manner:

Here are the visions of my mind while I was on my bed. While I was watching, there was a tree in the midst of the land. It was enormously tall. The tree grew large and strong. Its top reached far into the sky; it could be seen from the borders of all the land (Daniel 4:10,11 NET)

The tree was large enough to be seen at the borders of the “land”—not the entire earth. The Hebrew word *ereṣ* translated “earth” is the same Hebrew word which means “land” in other contexts.

Therefore, it is not necessary to assume that the tree was large enough to be seen by all peoples who lived on all parts of the globe.

4. Jesus Was Not Taken To A Literal Mountain

Matthew 4:8 does not prove that the biblical writers believed the earth is flat. The passage where Satan brings Jesus to a high mountain is not to be understood in a literal manner. Scripture says that Satan showed Christ all

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

the kingdoms of the earth in an instant. This implies it was in some sort of vision. Luke points this out when he records what occurred. He wrote:

So he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (Luke 4:5 CSB).

The fact that the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms in a moment of time supports the viewpoint that this was something that occurred in a vision. It was well-known to the writers of the gospels, that even if the earth had been flat, it would have been impossible for Christ and Satan to see the extent of the earth from some mountaintop in the city of Jerusalem. Nobody would have believed that this would have been possible.

Therefore, this passage would not have been understood as something that Jesus and Satan could literally see from one particular mountain.

5. Revelation 1:7 Does Not Teach A Flat Earth

Finally, the reference in the Book of Revelation, where it says, “every eye shall see Him,” can be understood in a number of ways.

First, it could be seen as speaking symbolically. Since the Book of Revelation employs a number of literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, metaphor, and hyperbole, this may be one of those instances. If this is the case, then it is wrong to attempt to interpret it literally.

Furthermore, when the words “all” and “every” are used in Scripture they are sometimes qualified. In other words, not every single individual is meant. There are many examples of this.

Of course, there is another way of understanding this reference. As the Lord returns to earth with His saints His path may be one where He actually circles the globe so that every eye will indeed see Him.

Any of these solutions is possible. We do not need to assume a flat earth to properly understand what the author had in mind.

6. Another Possibility: The Subject Is Never Addressed

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

There is another way of looking at all of these passages which seemingly view the earth as either flat or spherical—the subject is not addressed. All of the references, either for a flat earth or for a spherical earth, are wrongly understood. It is never the intention of the author to teach the shape of the earth—whether flat or spherical. This makes the question a non-issue.

Whatever the case may be, the evidence in Scripture certainly does not lead us to the conclusion that the God of Scripture created an earth which was flat.

Summary To Question 25

Does The Bible Teach A Flat Earth? (The Earth Has Four Corners)

There has been the claim that the Bible teaches a “flat earth.” This, it is argued, is one of the many unscientific views held by the writers of Scripture. Tragically, many Bible-believers in the past as well as in the present, have actually insisted that the earth is indeed flat because this is what they understand the Scripture to say. The arguments are as follows:

We know that the people in the ancient world likely believed in a flat earth. Israel was probably no different. In fact, one of the proofs that the biblical writers believed that the earth was flat is the assertion that the earth has four corners. This, it is claimed, assumes a flat earth.

In addition, it is also alleged that there are a number of passages which can only be understood if we assume the earth was flat. Therefore, it is claimed that the writers of Scripture held the same view of the earth as their contemporaries.

There are a couple of ways to respond to this accusation. To begin with, it is uncertain whether the ancients universally held to a flat earth. In fact, there are enough clues from simple observation to indicate the earth is spherical not flat. Indeed, the ancients could observe ships sailing on the horizon with the mast being seen first on arrival and then last when sailing away. Certainly, many in the ancient world realized the earth was not flat.

The passages referring to the four corners of the earth are merely symbolic ways of stating the four points of the compass—something which we still do today. It is simply the language of appearance.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Also, the passages which supposedly clearly portray a flat earth do not have to be interpreted that way. Therefore, the idea that the Scriptures present a flat earth does not fit the evidence.

There is something else to be considered. There are some passages that seem to teach that the earth is a sphere rather than merely flat. It is possible that it was the intent of the author to teach that the earth was round.

However, it is also possible, that this subject was not addressed at all by the biblical authors. When references are made to the earth it is not meant to be a scientific explanation concerning how the earth is shaped. If we keep this in mind, then we will have no problem. The shape of the earth was never specifically dealt with in the writings of Scripture for the fact that it was not relevant to what the biblical writers were addressing.

Whether the people actually believed the earth was flat is another matter. Though the nations around Israel may have held this viewpoint it does not necessarily follow that every Israelite held the same unscientific perspective. Some may have, some may have not. This is not the issue. The issue is this: does the Bible specifically teach that the earth is flat. The answer to that question is a clear “No!”

Question 26

Does Scripture Teach That the Earth Actually Sits On Pillars?

Scripture is often accused of being unscientific in a number of different ways. Among the so-called unscientific viewpoints of the Bible is the supposed teaching that the earth's foundation actually sits upon pillars.

Is this what the Bible teaches about the nature of the earth? Did the biblical writers assume the earth was standing upon pillars to hold it up?

Does The Earth Have Pillars?

Scripture supposedly speaks of the earth as having pillars which holds it up. We read in the Book of First Samuel:

He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world (1 Samuel 2:8 ESV).

This is a prayer of Hannah—the mother of Samuel. Does her statement mean that the biblical world view is that the earth is supported by pillars?

There is more. In the Book of Job, we read of the pillars of heaven. Job himself said:

The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke (Job 26:11 ESV)

Pillars have to hold up something. In this instance, it is claimed, that these pillars hold up heaven.

Does this confirm the idea that the biblical writers saw both heaven and the earth as being propped up by some type of pillar or column? Is this what the biblical writers taught?

Response To The Idea That The Earth Sits On Pillars

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

This accusation really has no merit. For one thing, what we have recorded in First Samuel is the prayer of Hannah—it is not the words of the Lord or one of His prophets. We should not necessarily assume that her words need to be understood as teaching divine truth.

In addition, it seems that she did not really say that the earth is founded upon pillars. The Christian Standard Bible says:

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the garbage pile. He seats them with noblemen and gives them a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; He has set the world on them (1 Samuel 2:8 CSB).

The point of the prayer is the recognition of the power of God. It is the Lord, the God of the Bible, who has created this world and placed it on a solid foundation. This foundation cannot be moved. This is what Hannah is emphasizing.

As far as pillars holding up the heavens, in that same chapter in the Book of Job, where this statement is found, we are told that the earth actually rests upon nothing. Job said:

God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7 NLT).

Even today a better scientific description of the earth could not be given. This is hardly consistent with the idea that Job believed actual pillars were holding up the earth and heaven.

Again, we have to remind ourselves that this entire section of Job is not to be understood as necessarily teaching God's truth on all subjects which it deals with. The Lord Himself told Job what He thought of Job's observations:

Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?" (Job 38:1-2 NLT)

Therefore, it does not really matter what Job, or his "friends" may or may not have thought. They were not speaking for God.

These Are Figures Of Speech

Again, we must emphasize that the biblical writers used figures of speech to describe the world as they observed it. We should not assume that these figurative expressions should be understood literally any more than we today literally understand these same expressions.

Summary To Question 26

Does Scripture Teach That The Earth Actually Sits On Pillars?

There are places in Scripture where it says the earth sits upon pillars. This has been understood to be a non-scientific superstitious view of the world. Before the rise of modern science seemingly all people had a similar view that the earth sat upon something or was held up by something. Does this mean the Bible is in error?

There are a couple of ways to respond to this accusation. First, we must determine, in context, who is making this statement about the pillars and what he or she is trying to say. In some cases, the word translated pillars actually means “foundations.” It is not specifically speaking of pillars as we understand them.

Even if the speaker is referring to literal pillars, was that person reflecting the view of the biblical author or was the biblical author merely recording what someone said.

Second, the descriptions in Scripture are the best way in which the ancients could have expressed the supremacy of the God of the Bible—it is His mighty power which keeps the world in its place.

We should not assume that there is some intent to give a scientific explanation as to how the earth is situated in our solar system. This is not the purpose of the biblical account.

Question 27

Why Does the Bible Say That the Moon Is A Light?

The Bible says that on day four of creation God made two great lights. Scripture puts it this way:

And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:16-18 CSB).

In these verses, the greater light is the sun and the lesser light is the moon. The purpose of each light is given—the greater light is to rule the day and the lesser light is to rule the night.

However, this presents a problem for the moon is not a light. Furthermore, this same idea is taught by Jesus:

But in those days, following that distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light (Mark 13:24 NIV).

Does this mean that Jesus Himself considered the moon to be a light?

Response: The Moon Is Never Said To Be The Source Of Light

The answer to this is relatively simple. Scripture speaks of the moon as a “light bearer” but it never indicates that it is the source of light.

In addition, we find that Jesus links the light of the moon with the light of the sun. When the light of the sun becomes extinguished, then the moon does not give off its light.

Consequently, He correctly links the light which the moon gives with the light which comes from the sun.

In sum, there is no scientific error in Scripture when the moon is referred to as “a light.”

Summary To Question 27

Why Does The Bible Say That The Moon Is A Light?

In the Genesis creation account, the moon is described as being a “light.” Scripture says that God made two great lights—one to rule the day and the other to rule the night.

However, the moon is not a light—it merely reflects the light of the sun. This is assumed to be an unscientific description of our solar system. To make matters worse, Jesus Himself spoke of a time when the moon would not give its light. What are we to make of all of this?

This is not really a difficulty. The description of the light bearers, the sun and the moon, is from the perspective of an observer here upon the earth. From our vantage point, the moon is a light—it lights the night sky.

The author of Genesis, Moses, is not attempting to teach us the source of the light of the moon rather he is merely telling us that God created two light sources—one for day and the other for night. There is nothing in his description that is meant to teach us about the nature of these light sources. To sum up, the moon is a light from our vantage point here upon the earth.

Furthermore, when Jesus spoke of the moon not giving its light, He linked it with the sun being darkened. This correctly assumes that the light of the moon is dependent on the light from the sun.

Consequently, we have no scientific misunderstanding in Scripture of where the moon derives its light.

Question 28

Is the Gospel Found In The Stars? (The Mazzaroth)

It has been asserted that the entire story of the gospel of Jesus Christ was actually portrayed in the stars. It has been claimed that the constellations present God's truth to the world in vivid form. This is also known as the "Mazzaroth."

Although the initial work on this subject was done in the nineteenth century by a woman named Frances Rolleston, it became popularized in America through the work of Bible commentator J.A. Seiss, and in England, through the writings of E.W. Bullinger.

The Theory Explained

The basic idea is that God's message has been revealed in the patterns of the stars. It could have come from God Himself who revealed these patterns and their exact meaning to the early inhabitants on the earth.

There is also the thought that some of the early people named the various constellations in an effort to preserve for the world what they knew of God's plan of salvation.

All of this would have occurred before there was any written revelation from the Lord. Support for this idea is supposedly found in certain parallels between the plan of salvation and the mythologies associated with the constellations. It has been thought that pagan mythology perverted these names and their original meaning.

Support For The Theory

It is also claimed by some that there is some biblical support for this theory. The evidence for the gospel in the stars is usually given as follows.

The Need

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

It is argued that the gospel in the stars was a necessity because of the interval between the original creation of Adam and the first written revelation from the Lord. Adam lived some 4,000-5,000 years before the time of Christ but the first written revelation from the Lord came with the writings of Moses about 1,400 B.C.

This would leave the human race without a written revelation from God for at least 2,500 years. To make up for this lack of a written revelation, the Lord wrote the gospel message in the stars and passed on the meaning to Adam, or his son Seth. They, in turn, passed it on to others until God's written revelation began.

The following lines of evidence are usually brought up to support this idea.

1. God Named The Stars

To begin with, the Bible itself says that God named each and every star. The psalmist wrote the following about God naming these heavenly bodies:

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name
(Psalm 147:4 NIV).

Therefore, according to Scripture, every star does have a name.

2. The Names May Have Been Told To Humans

It has been alleged that God revealed these names to the first inhabitants of the earth. The first century writer Flavius Josephus claimed that this knowledge was given to one of the sons of Adam—Seth. It has also been speculated that Seth received these names from his father—Adam.

We do know that Adam was given the task to name all the animals which the Lord had made. The Book of Genesis says:

Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:19-20 ESV).

Since Adam named the animals, then it is possible that God, who named all the stars, revealed to Adam His message of salvation in the names He gave to these stars. It is certainly consistent with the emphasis of “naming” in Scripture.

3. The Message Of The Stars is Proclaimed in the Sky

The Bible also says that the heavens give a continuous testimony to the glory of God. The psalmist wrote the following:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world (Psalm 19:1-4 NIV).

4. Paul Cited This Message to Illustrate The Gospel In The Stars

A passage from the Book of Romans is used to support the idea that it is the “gospel message” that is proclaimed:

But I ask, have they not heard? Yes, they have: Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Romans 10:18 NET).

Simply put, it is argued that Psalm 19 specifically states that God’s message has been given to humanity “in the skies” when it tells us, “their voice goes out into all the earth.”

The fact that Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 in a passage about the message of the gospel going out into all the world seems to indicate that he believed that the stars themselves proclaimed the message of Christ.

From these passages, it is contended that God originally placed a message about Himself in the stars—the gospel. This message was eventually perverted by the mythologies of the various nations of the ancient world.

5. The Names Of The Stars Preach The Gospel Message

It has been claimed that the names of the stars in Hebrew, when read in succession with one another, actually preach the message of the gospel.

In sum, we have two basic assumptions about the “gospel in the stars.”

First, the names that the Lord gave to the stars contained the gospel message and second these names were revealed to the first humans, Adam and Seth, to pass along to future generations until God’s Word was put into written form.

Response

While there are a number of arguments given for the idea that God placed the gospel in the stars there are indeed a number of obvious problems with holding this viewpoint. We can summarize the main ones as follows.

1. We Are Never Told In Scripture That God Informed Humans The Names Of The Stars

For one thing, while we are told that God named all of the stars, we are never told that God informed humans as to the names of these stars. There is absolutely nothing in Scripture to support the idea that humans were ever told their names.

2. The Purpose Of The Stars

The stars were originally given to allow humanity to mark the times and seasons. In the Genesis creation account, it says the following:

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years” (Genesis 1:14 NIV).

According to Scripture the stars were given to separate night from day as well as to mark off the seasons. Nothing is said about them being used to preach any message to the inhabitants of the earth.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The continuous message which the stars do proclaim is the power and majesty of the Creator God of the Bible. It shows that we are here by means of the work of an all-powerful God.

It does not tell us, however, who this God is or what He wants from us. This is the job of special revelation which is contained in the pages of Scripture. In other words, the sun, moon and the stars, by themselves, tells us nothing specifically about the God who created them.

3. We Are Never Told To Search The Stars

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to search the stars for any detailed message of God. Indeed, the only message the stars give, according to Scripture, is the testimony of the existence and power of God—not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. The Names of the Stars Do Not Preach the Gospel

It has been contended that when the names of the stars are examined in the original Hebrew, they reveal the message of the gospel. However, there is no evidence whatsoever that this is true. The etymology of these words simply do not match up with the claims.

To make the stars preach the message of Christ one has to create meanings of the Hebrew words that either do not exist or are secondary meanings of the terms.

Therefore, the idea that the gospel was somehow originally embedded in the stars is without convincing evidence.

Summary To Question 28 Is The Gospel Found In The Stars? (Mazzaroth)

There is the belief that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has actually been proclaimed from the beginning of creation in the constellations. This was before any written Scripture existed.

It is true that God named all of the stars. Some feel that he told these names to Adam. Scripture does say that Adam named all the animals.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Therefore, it is possible that God told Adam the names of these stars and the message they proclaimed. The Bible does say that the stars proclaim a continuous message to humanity.

While this idea is certainly possible, there is no biblical evidence to sustain it. The message which the stars continuously proclaim is the power and greatness of God. There is no evidence that they proclaim any specific message as to who this God is or what He expects from humanity.

Furthermore, nowhere in God's Word are we told to look at the stars to discover any message from God. On the contrary, we are told to search the Scriptures for God's truth.

Whatever the case may be, the idea that the gospel was once proclaimed in the names of the constellations should not be used as some type of evidence that the God of the Bible gave these particular stars their name. There is too much unknown about this subject to make such an assertion.

Question 29

Does the Bible Speak About Cavemen?

One question that often comes up in the Bible/science debate concerns that of cavemen. Does the Bible have anything to say about these people?

1. Scripture Describes People Living In Caves

The Bible describes a number of people who actually made their dwelling place in a cave. In the Book of Genesis, we find that Lot lived in a cave after he fled Sodom:

Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave (Genesis 19:30 NIV)

Scripture also tells us that when David was running from Saul, he lived in a cave:

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him (1 Samuel 22:1 ESV).

Obadiah hid a hundred prophets in a cave and fed them bread and water, to save them from Jezebel:

While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water) (1 Kings 18:4 NIV).

To escape the Midianites, the Israelites lived temporarily in caves. Elijah himself lived in a cave:

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9 ESV).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Even Job mentions people who lived in caves:

But now I am mocked by those who are younger than I, by young men whose fathers are not worthy to run with my sheepdogs. A lot of good they are to me--those worn-out wretches! They are gaunt with hunger and flee to the deserts and the wastelands, desolate and gloomy. They eat coarse leaves, and they burn the roots of shrubs for heat. They are driven from civilization, and people shout after them as if they were thieves. So now they live in frightening ravines and in caves and among the rocks (Job 30:1-6 NLT).

As far as the Bible is concerned, as people started to spread out and fill the earth they lived in a variety of places. This includes caves. Consequently, the idea that certain people made their homes in caves is not contrary to Scripture.

2. Early Humans Were Not Ignorant Savages

The Bible says that some of the earliest inhabitants of the earth lived in caves. Yet the Bible does not teach that early humanity was composed of ignorant brutes which lived exclusively in caves. Scripture knows nothing of pre-Adamic creatures which were half-human half-ape. In that sense, cavemen never existed.

According to the Bible, the first humans were highly advanced people. The Bible says that Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve, built a city:

Then Cain's wife became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Enoch. When Cain founded a city, he named it Enoch after his son (Genesis 4:17 NLT).

The very first human conceived was a called a builder—not a cave-dwelling brute. We also read the advances made by other early humans:

Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute. Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron (Genesis 4:20-22 NIV).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

These descriptions do not indicate early humanity being unlearned cave-dwellers. To the contrary, the human race fell from an original perfect state.

Thus, instead of the humanity getting better and better throughout time, humanity is actually falling further from original perfection.

This is completely contrary to the teaching of the theory of evolution. Therefore, the half-ape cavemen, as the theory of evolution portrays them, never existed.

Summary To Question 29 **Does The Bible Speak About Cavemen?**

One of the scientific difficulties in Scripture concerns the existence of cavemen. Where do they fit with Scripture?

The Bible, in fact, mentions a number of people who did live in caves. However, this is not the real issue. The real question is this: “Did some type of pre-human creatures live in caves?” The Bible is clear on this matter. Such people did not exist.

The Bible says that Adam, the first human, was created perfect by God Himself. However, he and his wife Eve fell from this original perfect state. Thus, his descendants would still have been of great intelligence even though they would have been affected by sin. Scripture informs us that the offspring of Adam were intelligent human beings. Among other things, they built entire cities and were advanced in areas of music.

Consequently, the biblical picture of the first human beings is not that of cave men which walked around with their knuckles dragging on the ground.

According to the Word of God, there were no pre-human creatures which existed who were part ape and part human. The first humans were perfect—not ignorant savages.

Question 30

Does The Rabbit Chew Its Cud?

One of the so-called scientific errors found in the Bible concerns the rabbit chewing its cud. It has been a favorite illustration of unbelievers as to the “unscientific” nature of Scripture. We must first understand what the Bible has to say about clean and unclean animals.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read:

Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you (Deuteronomy 14:6,7 ESV).

Thus, the Bible lists the hare as an unclean animal, one that is not fit for human consumption. The same statement about the hare is made in the Book of Leviticus. It says.

The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you (Leviticus 11:6 NIV).

To be fit for human consumption the Bible said that an animal must chew its cud and divide the hoof. The rabbit is listed as an unclean animal because it does not have cloven hooves.

However, the Scripture says that the rabbit chews its cud. There are those who accuse the Bible of being in error because the rabbit is not a ruminant—it does not chew its cud.

There are two possible solutions to this often-asked question.

Solution 1: The Rabbit Appears To Chew Its Cud

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

One popular solution to this question is that the rabbit gives the appearance of chewing the cud. In fact, Linnaeus at first classified the hare as a ruminant, even though the four-stomach apparatus was lacking.

Furthermore, we must remember that the list of forbidden animals was intended to be a practical guide to the people of Israel, not as a scientific classification. When the Israelite went out in the wilderness looking for food, he might have assumed that rabbits were fit to eat since they ruminated like the cattle.

Indeed, each of them fed on the same kind of grass and herbs. This is why the law pointed out that they did not have hooves at all and therefore could not meet the requirements for edible food.

Therefore, the statement that the rabbit chews its cud should not be taken in the strict scientific classification. Moses listed things not as a comparative anatomist, but as things appeared to the observer. His explanation was not intended to be scientific. He accommodated the language so that the people would understand they were not to eat this creature.

Solution 2: The Hebrew Phrase Does Not Mean Chew The Cud

While the first solution is often the given for this problem, there is probably a better answer. This lies in understanding what the Hebrew text means. The expression “chew the cud” is usually understood in light of current usage—it describes an animal, such as the cow which swallows its food, then regurgitates it, chews it again and finally digests it. The rabbit does not do this.

However, this interpretation of the Hebrew expression is more precise than it is meant to be. Basically, the Hebrew refers to an animal who thoroughly chews its food—not necessarily one who chews its cud. The rabbit would certainly qualify under this definition of the term.

Therefore, Moses said the rabbit was not to be eaten because they do not have divided or split hoofs even though they thoroughly chew their food.

Summary To Question 30
Does The Rabbit Chew Its Cud?

The Bible says that the rabbit “chews its cud.” This is supposedly an example of a scientific error in Scripture—the rabbit does not chew its cud—it is not a ruminant. It does not swallow its food, regurgitate it, chew it again and then digest it.

One solution to this question notes that the rabbit does appear to chew its cud, from the viewpoint of an observer. Thus, what we have here in Scripture is the language of appearance—not strict scientific classification.

A better solution lies in the understanding of the expression “chew the cud.” We have placed our modern meaning on an expression which is not that precise. The Hebrew basically means to chew thoroughly. It is not necessarily describing a ruminant. Under this classification the rabbit fits. Therefore, the Scripture is not in error.

Question 31

Why Did God Restrict The Children Of Israel From Eating Certain Foods? (The Dietary Laws)

As the children of Israel were going through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, God gave them laws concerning certain animals they could eat and others that they could not eat.

What is the difference between these animals? Are the unclean animals unhealthy while the clean animals healthy? Is hygiene the answer or it is something else? Why were these regulations given?

Were The Laws Were Mainly Given Because Of Hygiene?

One of the popular explanations is that the food laws given to Israel were mainly for hygienic purposes. We do know that humans should avoid eating the carcasses of dead animals or eating animals which have died of natural causes.

Furthermore, certain of the unclean animals which Scripture mentions are known to transfer disease to humans. This is beyond any doubt.

However, this is not true of all of the unclean animals in the list. Indeed, some animals whom the Israelites were not allowed to eat have no known association with disease. The camel, for example, remains a delicacy for Arabs to this day. Furthermore, there is no known scientific evidence that the camel somehow passes disease to humans.

God also forbade the nation of Israel to eat pork. While raw pork is certainly not safe to eat, and uncooked pork can cause health problems, pork was a staple in the diet of Israel's neighbors. It seems that the ancients had learned to prepare it in such a way as to keep clear of the ill effects.

We should further note what is not mentioned in the list of clean and unclean edible things—poisonous plants. If the main purpose of the dietary laws was for health of the people, then why is there no reference to plants both clean and unclean? Why is this missing?

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

There is more. Some of the clean animals actually present health hazards to humans. Therefore, it is not simply a case of clean animals being healthy and unclean animals being unhealthy. There is some other reason or reasons as to why certain animals were labeled as clean and others as unclean.

Understanding God's Laws (Moral And Civil)

Why were certain animals clean while others were considered unclean? The answer to this question seemingly lies in understanding the purpose for the various laws which God gave to His people.

In the Old Testament, the commandments of God consisted of both the moral law and the civil law. The moral law dealt with behavior. The purpose of the moral law was to set of Israel apart from all other nations on the basis of their behavior toward both God and other humans. This unchanging moral law was to serve as a standard for all people of all generations.

The Civil Laws: Laws For Everyday Living

However, the civil law was different. It consisted of various rules and regulations which pertained to everyday living. These rules and regulations were to set Israel apart from the neighboring pagan nations. Among other things, these laws dealt with such issues as food and health.

While the moral law was to set Israel apart inwardly from other nations, the civil law was to set apart the children of Israel from all other nations on the basis of outer holiness. The chosen people were to remain separate and distinct in the eyes of the rest of the world. In doing so, they would not adopt the practices and superstitions of the idolatrous nations that surrounded them.

Thus, there was the forbidding of eating certain foods which were used among pagans as objects of sacrifice. For example, it was a common practice among neighboring pagan tribes to offer a pig as a sacred sacrifice to their idols. Israel was thus forbidden to eat pig meat.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The children of Israel were to keep themselves completely separate from all such pagan influence and practice. Indeed, the Israel was chosen by God to be a holy nation. These people were to submit themselves to the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This nation was to be a continuous reminder to the rest of the world that the living God set them apart from all other nations of the earth.

The Lesson From Jesus

The fact that we are not dealing with merely hygienic regulations can be seen in the teaching of Christ. We discover that He abolished the distinction between clean and unclean foods. We read the following in Mark:

And He said to them, “Are you also as lacking in understanding? Don’t you realize that nothing going into a man from the outside can defile him? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into the stomach and is eliminated.” (As a result, He made all foods clean) (Mark 7:18,19 CSB)

If hygiene were the sole purpose, or even the main purpose, of distinguishing some foods from others, then Jesus would not have said that all foods are clean. The evidence seems to lead us to the conclusion that ritual symbolism is more central to the purpose of these dietary laws than hygiene.

A further illustration of this can be found in an episode in the life of Simon Peter. The Book of Acts records it as follows:

He [Peter] saw heaven opened and an object coming down that resembled a large sheet being lowered to the earth by its four corners. In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat!” “No, Lord!” Peter said. “For I have never eaten anything common and unclean!” Again, a second time, a voice said to him, “What God has made clean, you must not call common.” This happened three times, and then the object was taken up into heaven. . . . Peter said to them, “You know it’s forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner. But God has shown me that I must not call any person common or unclean” (Acts 10:11-15,28 CSB).

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Peter learned an important lesson—that which God has made clean should never be called unclean.

Paul wrote to Titus and said that believers were allowed to eat all things. He put it this way:

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15 NIV).

Paul wrote to the Romans about eating in faith:

Accept anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about doubtful issues. One person believes he may eat anything, but one who is weak eats only vegetables. One who eats must not look down on one who does not eat; and one who does not eat must not criticize one who does, because God has accepted him (Romans 14:1-3 CSB).

Therefore, the dietary laws which were established by God in the Old Testament, and then rescinded in the New Testament, served a special purpose for the nation Israel.

As they were to be a distinct nation, a holy people, they were not to engage in the same practices of their neighbors. They were to be different from all other peoples.

Summary To Question 31

Why Did God Restrict The Children Of Israel From Eating Certain Foods?

The Bible says that God gave certain restrictions to the nation of Israel concerning what they could and could not eat. These dietary laws were to be kept as commandments of the Lord. It is often wondered why they were given.

A popular answer has been because of health and hygiene. Certain animals if eaten would have brought diseases upon the people while others would have been safe for the people to eat. While this is true to some extent, there are exceptions to this. Some of the clean animals can contain parasites

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

which can transfer to humans. On the other hand, certain of the unclean animals contain no known health problem for humans.

Since the New Testament in general, and Jesus in particular, said that all foods were allowable to eat, the issue surely cannot be one of health. God would not tell the people that they could eat certain foods which could cause them sickness or possibly death.

In fact, the Bible never specifically says that certain foods were to be not eaten because of health reasons. Their health is never mentioned. Something else must be the main reason for the giving of these restrictions.

The best answer seems to be the purpose of Israel in the ancient world. The Lord wanted His people separated from the practices and beliefs of the unbelieving nations. Israel was to be different. Therefore, their diets were to be different—not so much for health reasons but rather as to separate their practices from the practices of their superstitious neighbors. They were to be a “holy” nation.

Question 32

Did The Sun Actually Stand Still In Joshua's Long Day?

Whenever the subject arises concerning biblical events and their relationship to science, the story of Joshua and the sun standing still is usually brought up. It is one of the favorite texts of unbelievers to demonstrate the ignorance of the writers of Scripture.

The Account in Joshua Ten

In the tenth chapter of the Book of Joshua there is the account of Israel fighting a battle against the Amorites. During this battle, something happened which involved the sun:

The day the Lord delivered the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua prayed to the Lord before Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon! O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon!" The sun stood still and the moon stood motionless while the nation took vengeance on its enemies. The event is recorded in the Scroll of the Upright One. The sun stood motionless in the middle of the sky and did not set for about a full day. There has not been a day like it before or since. The Lord obeyed a man, for the Lord fought for Israel! (Joshua 10:12-14 NET).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

On the day the LORD gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the LORD in front of all the people of Israel. He said, "Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon." So the sun and moon stood still until the Israelites had defeated their enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day. The LORD fought for Israel that day. Never before or since has there been a day like that one, when the LORD answered such a request from a human being (Joshua 10:12-14 NLT).

This extraordinary event was also recorded in the Book of Jashar also called "The Scroll of the Upright One"—a book otherwise unknown.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

From this account, a number of questions naturally arise. Since we know that the sun does not move around the earth causing day and night but rather the earth revolves around the sun, why did Joshua address the sun rather than the earth? Did he believe the sun actually moved?

Scripture Uses the Language Of Appearance

We again emphasize that Scripture speaks in the language of appearance—the language of observation. From our point of view here upon earth the sun does rise in the morning and sets at night. From that vantage point Joshua addresses the sun with his request.

Thus, the language that Joshua used in addressing the sun and moon is the language of ordinary observation still used today in the scientific age.

Possibly Joshua and his contemporaries thought of the sun as moving around the earth, but his language should not be pressed to construct a “view of the universe” any more than should today’s reference to the rising and setting of the sun.

Is This Account Meant To Be Scientifically Accurate?

Some people feel that Joshua made a scientifically accurate request. The following explanation is typical of many who interpret this passage:

We might say, “How little Joshua knew.” But he knew his God! He knew that God had promised to go before His people to fight their battles and give them victory (Joshua 10:8). And in this battle he saw victory in its grasp, but time was running out. If he didn’t conquer the enemy before dark, they would regroup and attack Israel the next day. Knowing his God, his God’s power, and his God’s promise, he called out to God for help, and in the presence of all Israel, he commanded the “sun to stand still.” But the sun was already standing still, Joshua. It is the earth that moves, not the sun. Why didn’t Joshua cry out, “Earth quit moving,” or “Earth, slow down your spinning on your axis to prolong time.”

Joshua had no idea that his command slowed down 6.6 sextillion tons of spinning gravel and water to give Israel victory over her enemies.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

But Joshua did know something that God had revealed to him. Over 3,000 years ago he said something that would have met the approval of today's scientific establishment. His command in the Hebrew language was not "Sun, stand thou still," but "Sun, cease acting, or "Sun, stop working." It was then that the gravitational pull of the sun affected the earth. It was then the earth began to slow down and the day was lengthened (Robert Boyd, *Boyd's Bible Handbook*, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1983 p. 124).

This argument, though popular, is rather weak. It is not necessary to assume Joshua was scientifically sophisticated. It seems more likely that God honored the spirit of his request than to assume Joshua had some scientific insight that was not shared by the people of his day.

There Are Many Questions About This Account

There are many questions that this account brings up. How are we to understand the phrase, "The sun stood still?" What was the nature of Joshua's command? Did he want more sunlight or less sunlight? Did he need more time to win the battle or did he need relief from the heat of the sun? If the earth actually stopped rotating for 24 hours would not incredible catastrophes occur to everything upon the planet?

The Background To The Event

Before we examine the various views, it is important to know something of the background of the event. Joshua's army had marched all night from Gilgal to Gibeon, a distance of twenty miles, to do battle with their enemies.

Joshua needed the battle time prolonged because five strong kings had brought out their armies to fight his army in the open country. Joshua had the enemy on the run, and he did not want them to get back to their fortified cities. More time was needed for his troops to catch them. To prevent their return more daylight was needed. Hence, he asked God to lengthen the day.

The Bible Says The Sun Stopped

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The text does say that the sun “stopped” or “stood still.” Two Hebrew words are used in this context *amad* and *dom*.

The word translated “stand still” is the Hebrew word *dom*. In Scripture, it has the sense “cease,” or “rest.” For example, we read in the Psalms:

But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; they gathered against me.
Assailants I did not know tore at me and did not stop [*dom*] (Psalm 35:15 CSB).

In the Book of Lamentations, we read:

Their heart cried to the Lord. O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest [*dom*], your eyes no respite! (Lamentations 2:18 ESV).

In the same way, the Hebrew word *amad* which is translated as “stayed” or “stood still” has the sense of ‘cease:’

When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped [*amad*] flowing (2 Kings 4:6 NIV).

The word is used in the Book of Jonah for the sea ceasing to roar:

So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased [*amad*] from its raging (Jonah. 1:15 NKJV).

The fact that Joshua asked the sun to “stop” is not the issue. The question is, “In what sense did the sun stop?”

What Really Happened?

Joshua gave the command for the sun to “stand still.” There have been a number of ways in which commentators have sought to understand what occurred.

1. The passage is poetical and not to be understood literally.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

2. The sun “standing still” refers to an eclipse of the sun.
3. The earth actually stopped its rotation around the sun for almost twenty-four hours per Joshua’s request.
4. The earth’s rotation was slowed down, not stopped. This lengthened the day by almost twenty-four hours.
5. The sun and moon appeared to be out of their regular place by a supernaturally given mirage.
6. The sun stopped shining during the latter half of the day.
7. Rather than the day being prolonged, God prolonged the previous night.

We will look at each of these explanations and examine their strengths and weaknesses.

Option 1: The Language Is Poetical: It is Not Describing an Historical Event

There are some Bible students who see this account as being a poetical description of the battle and not to be taken literally. It has been argued that the poetical form of this passage is obvious to anyone who has the slightest understanding of the laws of Hebrew poetry. Therefore, we are not talking about an historical event since the language is not that of a narration of facts but rather of hyperbole.

However, though couched in poetical language, it seems clear from the text that some sign did occur in the heavens. The entire passage is written as a narrative of a miraculous event that actually happened. The question, therefore, is, “What is the nature of that event?”

Furthermore, the final statement in verse 13 clearly favors the idea that the sun stood still or that it slowed down its course across the sky.

Option 2: It Was An Eclipse Of The Sun

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Some feel the passage refers to an eclipse of the sun. One such person was the great Old Testament scholar, Robert Dick Wilson who translated Joshua 10:12b-14 as follows:

Be eclipsed, O sun, in Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Aijalon!
And the sun was eclipsed and the moon turned back, while the nation
was avenged on its enemies. It is not written in the Book of Jasher?
And the sun stayed in the half of the heaven, and set not hastily as
when a day is done. And there was never a day like that day before or
since, in respect to Jehovah's hearing the voice of a man. (Robert Dick
Wilson, "What Does 'The Sun Stood Still Mean?'" Moody Monthly,
October 1920).

According to this view, God granted Joshua's request for a favorable sign by causing an eclipse of the sun.

Option 3: The Earth Literally Stopped Rotating

Many have held that the earth actually stopped rotating for about twenty-four hours. From the peoples' vantage point the sun would have appeared to have stopped. Though this would give Joshua the time to win the battle, it would also cause terrible catastrophes on the planet.

Those who believe in the power of God realize that He could have prevented catastrophes from occurring.

Option 4: There Was A Slower Rotation Of The Earth

Some understand the text to mean that a slowing down of the movement of the earth is what happened. Instead of taking twenty-four hours for one rotation, it took from thirty-six to forty-eight hours. This would have given Joshua and his armies' sufficient daylight to win the battle over their enemies without causing the major disturbances that would have happened if the earth stopped rotating.

This would help solve the problem of the claims that the earth stopped rotating for a period of twenty-four hours. Indeed, inconceivable catastrophes would have occurred all over the entire planet if this is what occurred.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

While Bible-believers realize that the Lord could have prevented such catastrophes it really does not seem necessary. In fact, on the basis of the Hebrew text itself it is not necessary to believe that the entire planet was suddenly halted in its rotation for some twenty-four hours.

Indeed, Joshua 10:13 states that the sun “stopped in the midst of heaven” and “did not hurry to set for about an entire day.” The words “did not hurry to set” seem to point to a slowing of the movement of the sun not a complete stoppage.

Therefore, in answer to the prayer of Joshua, the Lord caused the rotation of the earth to slow down so that it made one full rotation in 48 hours rather than in 24. Consequently, the retarding of the sun in getting to sunset, gave Joshua and his soldiers the necessary time to achieve their victory.

Option 5: It Was a Miracle Of Refraction

There are some who see this event as a miracle of refraction. This theory contends the earth continued to rotate at its normal speed while God supernaturally gave a mirage that made it appear that the sun and the moon were out of their regular place.

Thus, God supernaturally provided more daylight so that Joshua could win the battle. This provides Joshua with the necessary light to fight the battle, yet to do so does not force us to accept any change in the rotation of the earth.

Option 6: Did the Sun Stop Moving Or Stop Shining?

Another options sees the prayer of Joshua as not asking for the extension of the daylight, but rather that the sun would stop ravaging its heat on him as well as his troops. Hence, the prayer was for the cessation of sunlight rather than its prolongation. The Lord answered his prayer with a huge hailstorm that permitted Joshua’s tired troops to become victorious. In this view, the term “stand still” basically means, “to keep from shining.”

Thus, the miracle was not one prolonging of the sunlight but rather it was a cessation of it. Indeed, the prayer Joshua’s was not at the end of the day

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

asking for more sunlight, rather it was at high noon, when the sun was directly overhead. He was asking for relief from the sun. Thus, the sun stopped its intense shining and things became dark.

Option 7: The Night Was Prolonged

There are those who say that it was not the day that was prolonged but actually the darkness from the previous night. While it has usually been assumed that Joshua prayed for the *day* to be lengthened there is another way of looking at the entire episode. Since he came upon the camp of the enemy at night what he needed was that the darkness to continue so that the night could be prolonged for his surprise attack.

From the position of the sun and the moon, it is argued that it was early in the morning when Joshua made his request. The answer to his request came in a prolonging of the darkness by means of a hailstorm. This view would be making it Joshua's long night rather than a long day.

Conclusion

We have seen that there are a variety of explanations to what happened in Joshua's long day without having to admit to scientific error. However, it is by no means clear which answer is the correct one.

Summary To Question 32

Did The Sun Actually Stand Still In Joshua's Long Day?

In the Book of Joshua there is a description of the sun "standing still" while Joshua is fighting a battle against the Amorites. There have been a number of attempts to explain the sense in which the sun could have stood still.

For one thing, the sun does not move. However, as we have noted, the description of the sun standing still is from that of an observer here upon the earth.

As to what happened in Joshua's long day there are a number of possible answers. Some believe the language is poetical and that we should not look for any scientific explanation.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

It has also been argued that what happened was a total eclipse of the sun. Some believe the earth stopped rotating for twenty-four hours while others believed the rotation was only slowed down.

There has also been the theory of a mirage. One theory has the night lengthened, not the day. Another theory has the clouds bringing relief from the heat as the sun stopped shining.

It does not seem possible to know which of these theories is the best. What we do know for certain is that the Lord performed a miracle on that day the likes of which has not been seen before or since.

Question 33

Has A Missing Day In History Been Found Which Confirms Joshua's Long Day?

Since the 19th century, there have been stories circulating about reports of a “missing day” in ancient Egyptian, Chinese, and Hindu sources.

There is also the story of a 19th century Yale astronomer who found that the earth was twenty-four hours out of schedule. This narrative has been passed on for a long time. In fact, in the 1930's, Bible-teacher Harry Rimmer wrote the following:

Another professor at Yale, Dr. Totten, suggested the astronomer read the Bible starting at the beginning and going as far as necessary, to see if the Bible could account for the missing time. When he came to the account of the long day of Joshua, the astronomer rechecked the figures and found that at the time of Joshua there were only twenty-three hours and twenty minutes lost. His skepticism justified, he decided that the Bible was not the Word of God because there was a mistake by forty minutes.

Professor Totten showed him that the Bible account does not say twenty-four hours, but rather ‘about the space of a whole day.’ On reading farther the astronomer found that God, through the prophet Isaiah and in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, promised to add fifteen years to his life (II Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38:1-21). To confirm this promise, the shadow of the sundial was turned back ten degrees. Ten degrees on a sundial is forty minutes on the face of a clock. When he found his day of missing time accounted for in the Bible, the astronomer bowed his head in worship of its Author, saying, “Lord, I believe!” (Harry Rimmer, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936, p. 33).

This story has been told and retold.

NASA Gets Into The Picture

Not only do we have this 19th century claim of a missing day, another story began circulating in the 20th century that made a similar claim. Supposedly

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

there was a man who worked with NASA who, with updated computers, made a similar discovery of the “missing day” in history.

Unfortunately, there is no truth whatsoever to these stories.

The Story Is Mathematically Impossible

This entire claim is actually mathematically impossible. For this story to be proven accurate, it requires a fixed reference point before Joshua’s long day. In fact, we would need to cross-check between both astronomical and historical records to detect any missing day. And to detect a missing 40 minutes requires that these reference points be known to within an accuracy of a few minutes.

The only way to determine a change in the location of the sun or the moon is to know their exact positions prior to the change, but there is no such reference point available. We do not know the precise moment when the created sun and moon were first placed in the sky. Even eclipse records do not prove useful in solving the problem. Therefore, this oft-repeated claim has no basis in fact.

It is tragic that Bible-believers continue to repeat a story that has been refuted dozens of times. Doing this sort of thing makes Christians look like they are scientifically inept.

Consequently no one should pass on this story about a missing day in history. While some have tried to argue that past history reveals a missing day there is no evidence that this actually happened.

As we observed in the previous question, the Lord did indeed perform a miracle at the time of Joshua. However, the nature of the miracle is debated. Therefore, we do not have to look for a “missing day” in history.

Summary To Question 33 Has A Missing Day In History Been Found Which Confirms Joshua’s Long Day?

One story that continues to circulate among Christians is that Joshua’s long day has been confirmed scientifically by some non-believing scientists.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Supposedly astronomers in the 19th century found a missing day in history. They were baffled at this until someone told them of the story of Joshua and the sun standing still.

This, however, did not equal an entire day because the account said that the sun did not go down for almost an entire day. Then someone remembered the story of God moving the sundial back ten degrees for Hezekiah. When the two accounts were put together, they were found to comprise one complete twenty-four-hour period. The missing day had been found! The scientist, upon realizing this, became a believer in the God of the Bible.

Unfortunately, there is no truth whatsoever to this story. For one thing, it is not even possible to calculate a missing day in history. The historical records are not that exact to where we could locate the time to one particular day or to forty minutes of one day.

In addition, while the sundial in Hezekiah's day did go back ten degrees, we do not know how this occurred. In the same manner, we do not know exactly what happened in Joshua's long day.

There are a variety of explanations which accept the miraculous nature of the account but do not require any part of a day as missing.

Consequently, nobody should be telling this story about the missing day in history. Not only is the story of the discovery of the missing day not true, the Bible does not require this to be what actually happened.

Question 34

Does The Bible Give An Inaccurate Value To Pi?

The following Scripture seems to give an inaccurate value for pi:

Then he cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7-1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference (2 Chronicles 4:2 NLT).

Some see this three to one ratio as inconsistent with an inerrant Scripture. The tank is said to be round, but the ratio is given as 3.0 to 1. The true value of pi is 3.14159 rather than 3.0. Is this a scientific error?

There Are Two Possible Solutions

There are two basic ways that this problem can be approached without admitting to a scientific error.

Option 1: The Writer Is Speaking In Approximations

The first solution sees the writer as speaking in approximate terms. As we have already said, the Bible does not claim to give technical scientific explanations for things, but rather speaks from the viewpoint of an observer. This is the same thing we all do in everyday speech. Therefore, in this instance, the writer is only speaking in approximate terms.

Option 2: The Writer Is Speaking Precisely

However, there is another solution that has the biblical writer speaking very precisely. The ten-cubit measurement was from brim to brim—that is from the outside edge to the other.

But verse five states the width of the edge was a handbreadth, or about four inches. So, the insider diameter was ten cubits (180 inches) minus two handbreadths (eight inches). Multiplying 172 inches by pi, the total is 540 inches, the same circumference given in verse two.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Whichever solution is adopted, it is clear that one not need assume a scientific error.

Summary To Question 34

Does The Bible Give An Inaccurate Value To Pi?

The Bible supposedly gives an inaccurate view of pi. The Scripture, in describing a round tank, says that the ratio is 3.0 to one rather than the scientific value of 3.14159.

However, this is most likely the Bible speaking in approximation rather than in scientific precision. Others, however, do argue that the Bible is precise. Either way there is no reason to assume a scientific error.

Question 35

How Could Iron Float And Wood Sink?

One of the events that the Old Testament records that appears unscientific is given in the Book of Second Kings. It is when wood sank and iron floated.

While Elisha and his fellow prophets were building new facilities near the Jordan River, one of the men lost an axe head as he was cutting down a tree. He cried out in dismay because the axe head had been borrowed. The Bible says Elisha then took charge of the situation:

Then the man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, the man of God cut a stick, threw it there, and made the iron float (2 Kings 6:6 CSB).

How are we to understand this event? The properties of iron make it sink while the properties in wood cause it to float.

This Was A Miracle

This is an excellent example of a biblical miracle in which God performs a sign contrary to the ordinary routine of nature. Certainly, this cannot be repeated in a laboratory experiment and observed. It happened only once for a particular purpose. The purpose of the sign was to encourage the people.

Truly, this miracle encouraged the group of faithful followers of the Lord that their God really is alive and that He would supernaturally provide for their needs even though many Israelites had turned from the true God to Baal

There Is An Alternative Explanation

Aramaic scholar George Lamsa thinks the axe head came to the top of the water because Elisha put the stick in its hole. He translates the verse as follows.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

And he cut off a stick and thrust it in there; and it stuck in the hole of the axehead (George Lamsa, translator, The Holy Bible Translated from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts, Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1961, p. 417).

The miracle was then one of divine guidance. When Elisha put the stick into the water it immediately found the axehead.

There is, however, no basis for his translation. Therefore, we are not to look for some ordinary natural explanation to explain this occurrence. It was a miracle of God as a sign to his people that He was with them.

Summary To Question 35 **How Could Iron Float And Wood Sink?**

There is an account in Second Kings where iron floated, and wood sank. Elisha the prophet threw a stick in the water where an axe head had sunk to the bottom. The wood sank and the iron floated to the surface. There is no scientific explanation for this. It was a miracle.

Since miracles are special events that act contrary to the normal order of things, it is not correct to call this a scientific error. Neither is it necessary to try to give a natural explanation or a scientific explanation as to what happened.

It was a unique event which God allowed to show the people that Elisha was His prophet.

Question 36

Did God Back Up The Sundial For Hezekiah?

During the reign of King Hezekiah, he asked for a confirmatory sign from the prophet Isaiah to verify that all Isaiah had predicted was true. We have the following account:

Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the LORD on the third day from now?” Isaiah answered, “This is the LORD’s sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?” “It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps,” said Hezekiah. “Rather, have it go back ten steps.” Then the prophet Isaiah called upon the LORD, and the LORD made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz (2 Kings 20:8-11 NIV).

In the Book of Isaiah, it says:

This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised: Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.” So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined (Isaiah 38:7,8 ESV).

Hezekiah was offered a choice—the shadow on the sundial could go either ten degrees backwards or forwards. Hezekiah assumed that the sun going backward would be a greater sign since it would go against nature. God granted Isaiah’s prayer and the sign occurred.

Which Sundial Was Used?

How did God move the sundial? Part of our consideration of this miracle concerns the type of sundial that was in mind. There have been three different suggestions:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

1. The sundial was possibly a series of steps leading from east to west. As the sun sank in the west the shadow would come down the steps and a glance at this shadow on the steps would indicate how much daytime was left.
2. Another type suggested is a hollowed-out hemisphere with lines on the inside wherein the shaded part will intersect various lines and show the time of day.
3. A third suggestion is that the sundial was a pillar with steps around it and as the sun moved across the heavens, the shadow of the pillar would fall on different steps, thus, giving a rough estimate of the time of day.

Regardless which of the three sundials was used, the miracle would be obvious to all concerned. It would not be as miraculous for the shadow to advance ten degrees as for the shadow to retreat.

Only supernatural intervention could cause the latter. This is the miracle that Hezekiah received. If the miracle occurred, how and what actually happened?

1. Was The Sun Backed Up?

One possibility is that the earth backed up in its trajectory to shed more daylight upon the sundial. The problem with this view is that it disturbs all the machinery in the heavens. There would have been untold destruction if this happened; unless God supernaturally intervened. While this is possible, it is not necessary to assume that this is what occurred.

In addition, 2 Chronicles 32:31 seems to restrict the phenomenon to the Holy Land:

However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart (2 Chronicles 32:31 NLT).

If this be the case, then it is not necessary to say that the sun backed up its trajectory.

2. Was It A Mirage?

Others have thought that the miracle was a supernatural mirage of the sun. In other words, what the people thought they saw on the sundial was not really there. They only thought they saw this occur but actually what they saw was a mirage. The miracle was the mirage the Lord created.

3. Was It A Miracle Of Lighting Up The Steps?

The miracle was possibly that of God miraculously lighting up the steps. The Bible does not say that the change on the sundial was due to any movement of the sun. In fact, the writer gives no explanation as to how it occurred.

Therefore, the biblical record allows us to assume that the miracle was confined to what happened on the sundial—not any movement with the sun or change in the length of the day. The fact that this account gives prominence to the sundial and the shadow gives evidence of this.

Conclusion: God Performed A Miracle But We Don't Know How

God performed a supernatural sign for King Hezekiah by making the shadow on the sundial retreat. There are several possible ways how He could have done it and we cannot be sure which, if any, of the suggested ways were used. The fact is that God did grant Hezekiah this sign.

Consequently, we should not attempt to give this miracle some scientific explanation or relate it to what happened in Joshua's long day.

It is simply best to admit that we do not know the explanation of this miracle. We must accept the testimony of the Word of God to the fact a miracle took place and leave it at that.

Summary To Question 36

Did God Back Up The Sun For Hezekiah's Sundial?

The Bible says that King Hezekiah wanted a sign from the prophet Isaiah that the Lord was going to heal him. The sign that God gave was

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

miraculously moving the sundial ten degrees backward for the king. There is no explanation given as to how He did it.

There have been a number of ways in which this has been understood. Some have argued that the sun actually backed up. However, this would have caused enormous problems for the entire solar system.

Others believe it was only a mirage. There is also the opinion that God merely lit up the steps without any change to the movement of the sun.

Whatever the case may be, it was indeed a miracle that confirmed the word of the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah.

The point is that the Bible does not tell us exactly how it happened, merely that it day happen. This is all we can say about this matter.

Question 37

Was Jonah Swallowed By A Whale?

There have been a number of accounts in Scripture that have caused problems for scientists and non-scientists alike. One of the more prominent accounts is the story of Jonah and the whale. The Bible records the following took place:

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (Jonah 1:17 ESV).

Are we to understand this literally? Was Jonah actually swallowed by a large fish?

It Was Not Necessarily A Whale

To begin with we must note that the Hebrew word does not necessarily correspond to our modern designation “whale.” It simply means a large sea creature and could refer to anything found in the sea. The Hebrew text of Jonah 2:1 actually reads *dag gadol* or “great sea creature” rather than a technical term for “whale.”

Ancient Hebrew did not have a special word for “whale.” The only other available term, *tannin*, was too vague to be used in this context to describe what swallowed Jonah. In fact, *tannin* could also mean shark, sea serpent, or even dragon. It all depends upon the context.

Technically, a whale is a “mammal” not a fish. However, we again emphasize that ancient Hebrew made no distinction.

Did then a large sea creature literally swallow Jonah?

Is This Account History Or Fiction?

Many people view the Book of Jonah as unhistorical and unscientific. For example, we read the following description of what took place:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Many Jews and Christians, in spite of the difficulties, have accepted the story as history. In the pre-scientific era this literal interpretation was acceptable (Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Jonah*, Harper's Bible Dictionary, New York: Harper and Row, 1952, p. 345).

The accusation is that in the “pre-scientific” era, people believed the literal account of Jonah being swallowed by this great sea creature. Seemingly, humankind knows better now.

The Bible Treats It As History

The Book of Jonah treats the account as history, not allegory. Furthermore, there is every good reason to accept this as a historical record. This can be seen by observing the following facts.

1. Jonah was a historical character.
2. The book was written as historical narrative.
3. The traditional view of Jews and Christians is that the book is historical.
4. Jesus testified to the accuracy of the account.

The evidence is as follows.

Jonah Actually Existed As An Historical Character

We know from another biblical reference that there was a prophet to Israel named Jonah. In Second Kings, we read the following:

He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:25 NKJV).

Here we have an historical reference to Jonah.

This Is An Historical Narrative

The Book of Jonah is written as a historical narrative. There is no indication within the account that it is to be treated otherwise. Until recently, neither Christians nor Jews questioned the historicity of the Book of Jonah. It has been accepted as an account of what actually occurred during the life of the prophet Jonah.

Jesus Testified To Jonah Surviving Inside the Sea Creature

Jesus Christ confirms the historicity of the account of Jonah. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that the sign of Jonah was going to be the sign of his resurrection:

He responded, “The people of an evil and unfaithful era look for a miraculous sign. But the only sign they will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of a huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:39,40 God’s Word).

Jesus accepted, at face value, the account of Jonah surviving after being swallowed by the sea creature. In His mind, the event did literally occur. He also believed the repentance of the people of Nineveh as something that occurred.

If Jesus is the One whom He claimed to be, God in human flesh, then His Word settles the matter.

In addition, Jesus puts the historicity of the account of Jonah and the sea creature on the same level as His resurrection. The analogy is clear. As Jonah was so Jesus will be.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was literally dead and then was raised from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is treated as a historical fact as is the account of Jonah.

All things point to the event as having literally occurred.

This Is Not Something Which Is Impossible

The next point that needs to be made is that there are creatures living in the sea who are capable of swallowing a human being whole. Sperm whales have been known to swallow unusually large objects, including a fifteen-foot long shark! The whale shark, as well as the blue whale, also has the capacity of swallowing a man whole. Sperm whales and whale sharks are not unknown in that part of the world.

However, beyond the fact that a natural explanation could possibly explain the episode, is that the Bible says God prepared a large sea creature to swallow Jonah. This could mean a special creation made for this very occasion or it could mean that God directed one of the large sea creatures to swallow the wayward prophet. Whatever the case, the supernatural hand of God was involved.

Summary To Question 37 Was Jonah Swallowed By A Whale?

The Bible says that a huge sea creature swallowed the rebellious prophet Jonah. There is every good reason to accept the account of Jonah in a literal manner. We know that Jonah was an historical character and a prophet of God. Furthermore, Jesus accepted the story of Jonah and the sea creature as truly occurring.

However, there are a number of issues that we cannot be certain of. We are not told what kind of sea creature was used. God could have specially prepared the animal involved or it could have been one of the sea creatures known to be able to swallow a human.

Whatever the explanation, the account given in Scripture is miraculous and it did occur as the Bible says.

Question 38

Does the Bible Speak of Mythical Creatures Such As The Unicorn?

In the King James Version of the Bible we read the Scripture speaking of a “unicorn.” We read the following in the Book of Job:

Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? (Job 39:9 KJV).

The psalmist wrote of this creature:

He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn (Psalm 29:6 KJV).

We also see the unicorn mentioned in the writings of the prophet Isaiah:

And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness (Isaiah 34:7 KJV).

Based upon these references to the unicorn, there are a number of people who claim the Bible is a book of unscientific fairy tales because it mentions this creature.

However, the biblical unicorn was indeed a real animal that existed, it is not an imaginary creature or the product of fairy tales. As we will discover, there are many misconceptions about this ancient creature.

Was It A One-Horned Animal?

The word translated “unicorn” in the King James Version comes to us by the way of the Greek and the Latin. In Job 39:9 the Greek word in describing this animal, *Monoceros*, means “one horned.” The Latin word is *unicornis* from which our English word unicorn is derived. Some Latin translations use the word *rhinoceros* to describe this creature.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

However, the precise mean of Hebrew word *re'em* is unknown. In fact, modern Hebrew dictionaries admit the precise meaning of the term is not clear.

The word is used in the Old Testament in describing this animal that did exist in ancient Israel. From the descriptions given in the Bible, it cannot conclusively prove how many horns the biblical unicorn had.

Past translations such as the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, Luther's German Bible (1534), and the King James Version of 1611 translated this Hebrew word with words which mean "one-horned animal."

However, modern translations of the Bible typically translate this Hebrew word as "wild ox." For example, the New English Translation says:

Is the wild ox willing to be your servant? Will it spend the night at your feeding trough? (Job 39:9 NET).

Most other English translations render the word in the same way. Consequently, the precise identity of this animal is uncertain.

The Unicorn Is Mentioned In The Context With Other Animals

In the Book of Job, the Lord refers to the unicorn in the context of other animals that were familiar to Job. This list included lambs, lions, bulls, goats, donkeys, horses, dogs and eagles. In other words, whatever this animal was, Job was familiar with it.

In fact, for God's illustration to be have any meaning whatsoever, Job had to be familiar with each of these animals on the Lord's list.

Indeed, an imaginary animal would have defeated the purpose of this illustration that the Lord provided for suffering Job. Therefore, we are not talking about a mythical creature.

The Unicorn Described Elsewhere

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The Bible describes this animal in other contexts. The psalmist observed that they skip like calves, Isaiah says they bleed when they die. Again, we emphasize that this is an actual animal that existed.

We Do Not Know Its Exact Identity

As can be imagined, there have been a number of attempts to describe exactly what the unicorn was, as well as what it looked like.

For example, reports from southern Africa in the 18th century describe rock drawings, and a number of eyewitness accounts, which speak of fierce, single-horned, equine-like animals. Among the reports these animals are described as having “a single horn, directly in front, about as long as one’s arm, and at the base about as thick.” Could this be the biblical unicorn? We simply do not know.

Other candidates have also been mentioned. This includes an animal known as the “auroch.” It was a large wild ox that was likely the ancestor of modern domestic cattle. These creatures have not existed since 1627.

The Importance of The Unicorn

In sum, the importance of the unicorn as described in Holy Scripture is not so much its specific identity—as much as we would all like to know exactly what this creature was. Rather the importance of the unicorn is its reality! As we have noted, the Bible is clearly describing a genuine animal that existed.

From the descriptions given in Scripture the unicorn was a powerful animal possessing one or two strong horns. It was certainly not the mythical animal that has been popularized through the years in movies, books, and songs.

Whatever this creature was, like so many other animals of the past, it is now likely extinct. Hence, the fact that the unicorn does not exist in our modern world should never cause us to doubt that it once existed in the biblical times.

Summary To Question 38:

Does The Bible Speak of Mythical Creatures Such As the Unicorn?

The Bible does speak of a creature who existed in the past which the *King James* Version labeled as a “unicorn.” Since the unicorn is popularly viewed as a mythical creature, many assume the Bible is in error in describing such an animal that science knows did not exist. However, the evidence speaks to the contrary.

First, the name unicorn, or “one-horned” may not precisely describe this creature. The Hebrew word can mean something like “wild ox” or “white antelope.”

While the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament rendered the word “one-horned,” many scholars today believe this was in error. Nowhere in Scripture are its horn or horns described.

The Latin Vulgate rendered the word *unicornis* or *rhinoceros* based upon the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture, not upon the Hebrew word itself. In fact, modern Hebrew dictionaries typically say, “a word of unknown meaning.”

Various attempts have been made to identify this animal that the biblical writers were aware of but so far, none has received wide acceptance.

Therefore, the Bible is describing a creature that once existed but no longer does.

Question 39

What Was The Star of Bethlehem

The Bible records that a star led the wise men, the Magi, to Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus Christ:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him” . . . After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. (Matthew 2:1-2,9 CSB).

From this, we see that it was a star in the heavens that led the Magi from somewhere in the East to Jerusalem. In other words, the star was moving to the West.

From Jerusalem, the star then appeared over the place where the child Jesus was.

What was this star? Was it sent from God? What was its origin?

Option 1: It Was A Supernova

Some have held the star to be a supernova. A supernova is a star that violently explodes and then proceeds to give off great amounts of light for a short period of time (a few weeks to a few months). But this is only a theory with no evidence to support it.

Moreover, this theory seems difficult to accept in light of Matthew 2:9. It says the star stood over the place where Jesus was.

Option 2: It Was Halley’s Comet

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Others have speculated that it was a comet that passed overhead at that time. Halley's Comet has been suggested as a possibility. But the time of its occurrence, 12 B.C., is too early for the birth of Christ. Furthermore, a comet would not explain Matthew 2:9.

Option 3: A Planetary Conjunction Occurred

Another theory holds that what the magi saw was a conjunction of planets. In 7 B.C. in the months of May, October and November, there was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the zodiacal constellation of Pisces.

We know that Jews living during the Middle Ages considered this planetary alignment to have Messianic significance. This could explain many details. If the magi saw the conjunction in May, the later alignments in October and November could explain Matthew 2:9.

The problem with this view is that there is no solid evidence that the ancients referred to such an alignment as a "star." Furthermore, Jupiter and Saturn would have been one degree apart and not fused into the same image. Yet this theory is still a possible explanation of what occurred.

Option 4: It Was A Purely Supernatural Event

There are many who believe that the account as given in the Gospel of Matthew demands a purely supernatural interpretation. This would end the need for attempting to find an astronomical explanation of what the Magi saw. God may have supernaturally provided the star in the East and then again over the house where the baby Jesus slept.

Although the text does not necessarily demand that we take this position, it is entirely possible that we are dealing with a supernatural event that does not find any explanation in the history of astronomy.

The Evidence Is Inconclusive

Because the evidence is inconclusive, we cannot be certain what it was that the Magi saw, or whether or not it was a supernatural phenomenon. We

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

can, however, be certain that they saw something that was used by God to lead them to Bethlehem and the baby Jesus.

Summary To Question 39 **What Was The Star Of Bethlehem?**

The Bible says that a star guided the wise men, or the Magi, that came to visit Jesus at His birth. However, we do not exactly know what this star may have been.

Some suggest a supernova or exploding star. Halley's Comet has also been suggested. There was also a planetary conjunction that occurred in the years before the birth of Christ.

It is also possible that we are dealing with a purely supernatural event.

Therefore, any answer we can give to this would be pure speculation.

Question 40

Does The Bible Foresee Scientific Discoveries?

The Bible does not contain statements that are scientifically inaccurate. They do not make the same absurd mistakes that were made by others living in their day. But the Bible goes further in that it foresees scientific discoveries before they were known to the world at large.

During the time when the Bible was being composed there was much superstition and ignorance concerning the nature and function of the universe.

Though no nation or sacred writings were immune to superstition, the Bible is a notable exception. We do not find the biblical writers committing the same types of errors as their contemporaries.

Possible Examples Of Modern Science Foreseen By The Biblical Writers

The biblical writers not only avoided scientific errors they also were able to foresee scientific discoveries years ahead of their time. The following examples should demonstrate that the biblical writers were given information that their contemporaries did not have.

1. The Earth Is Not Supported by Anything

The Scripture also says that the earth hangs in space. We read in the Book of Job:

He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7 NKJV).

This idea was an oddity in the ancient world, for most people believed the earth was supported by something.

2. The Stars Are Innumerable

The Bible also speaks of innumerable stars. The prophet Jeremiah recorded the Lord saying the following:

I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore (Jeremiah 33:22 NIV).

Before the telescope was invented, people believed they could count the stars. Even the great astronomer Johann Kepler numbered the stars at slightly over one thousand. Not until modern times did humankind realize that numbering the stars is an impossibility.

3. The Bible Speaks Of The Circularity Of The Earth

The Bible speaks of the circularity of the earth. Isaiah the prophet wrote:

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers (Isaiah 40:22 ESV).

Early man often viewed the earth as being flat.

4. Scripture Forbids To Eat The Flesh of Dead Animals

The Israelites were forbidden to eat the flesh of any animal that had died a natural death. Moses wrote the following:

Do not eat anything you find already dead (Deuteronomy 14:21 NIV).

Today we know that dead animals can carry lice, flies, and fleas. Each of these are carriers of disease.

5. The Bible Speaks Of Quarantine Of Contagious Diseases

God ordered those who had contagious diseases to be separated from the rest of the camp:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp (Leviticus 13:45,46 NIV).

The Bible is the only book in the ancient world that ordered this practice.

6. Israel Was Forbidden To Drink Stagnant Water

The children of Israel were forbidden to drink water from small or stagnant pools or from water that had been contaminated by coming into contact with animals or meat (Leviticus 11:29-36).

It is only in the last 100 years that medical science has learned that contaminated water can cause typhoid and cholera.

7. Rabbits And Pork Were Forbidden To Be Eaten

Today humans eat rabbits and pork, although both are susceptible to infectious parasites. The children of Israel were not allowed to eat either of these animals:

And the hare, so they also may never be eaten. And the pig may not be eaten, for though it has split hooves, it does not chew the cud (Leviticus 11:6,7 NLT).

Though they may be cleanly fed and well-cooked, they both can be a source of disease. Roasting pork over an open flame is not sufficient to kill the parasites that could have attached themselves to the animal. The mere handling of pork can also transmit parasites.

Consequently, the children of Israel were not even allowed to touch the body of a dead swine.

8. There Are Hygienic Regulations

The Bible contains hygienic regulations for the children of Israel. The Bible commands that sewage should be disposed of outside the camp of Israel:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

Mark off an area outside the camp for a latrine. Each of you must have a spade as part of your equipment. Whenever you relieve yourself, you must dig a hole with the spade and cover the excrement (Deuteronomy 23:12,13 NLT).

This precaution would help eliminate diseases such as typhoid fever.

9. Circumcision Was To Be On The Eighth Day

God also commanded his people to circumcise the male children on the eighth day. We read of this in the Book of Genesis:

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring (Genesis 17:12 ESV).

The full meaning of that command has only been recently understood. Doctor Russel J. Thomsen explains:

One simple aspect of God's command to Abraham helped prevent excessive bleeding with circumcision of the newborn. That was the instruction that the rite should be done on the eighth day of life. Modern medicine has come to understand the mechanisms at work in the clotting of blood. Of major importance in blood clotting is prothrombin, a compound made in the liver and the precursor of the active clotting agent thrombin. It has been well established that within a few hours after birth prothrombin becomes relatively depleted and does not become replenished by the infant's liver until about the eighth day of life (Russel J. Thomsen, M.D., *Medical Wisdom from the Bible*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974, p. 17).

It has been only since 1940 that it has become a standard practice to circumcise all male infants.

10. Pest Control Was Prescribed In Scripture

The Bible also gave a prescription for the control of pests. Robert Boyd writes:

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

A sure-fire remedy for the control of pests was given centuries ago, and yet we are plagued today with insects, oftentimes with no remedy. Moses commanded Israel to set aside one year in seven when no crops were raised [Leviticus] 25:1-24. God promised sufficient harvest in the sixth year to provide for this period. Following this plan, here's what would happen—insects winter in the stalks of the last year's harvest, hatch in the spring, and are perpetuated by laying eggs in the new crop. Now, if one year in seven no crop were raised, there is nothing for the insects to subsist upon and the pests are controlled by this method. Man's method today is crop rotation, but we're still pestered with insects. This method will never approach God's method. "Then there was the year of Jubilee after every seven Sabbatical years, which would serve to eliminate the insects which had a cycle of seven years or more or less and which were not affected by the one year in seven" (Robert Boyd, *Boyd's Bible Handbook*, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1983, p. 78).

Many other examples could be added. With regard to science, the biblical writers were separate from their contemporaries in the ancient world in the following two ways: (1) they did not repeat the commonly held errors of their day (2) they spoke of things that only present-day science has come to realize is scientifically accurate.

Be Careful Of Extremes In This Area

While we believe that the Scriptures are scientifically accurate, and that there are some examples of Scripture foreseeing modern science, there are some writers who have gone too far in their assertion that the Bible anticipates modern science. Here are some of the examples.

Some writers have found the undulatory theory of matter is seen in Genesis 1:2. Wireless telegraph is seen in Job 38:35. The concept of parallax is seen in James 1:17. Atomic theory of matter is seen in Hebrews 11:3 and atomic binding in Hebrews 1:3. Light as the basis of all substance is seen in Genesis 1:3, nuclear fission in Genesis 1:4, and a final chain reaction in Isaiah 34:4 and Luke 21:25-28. An expanding universe is seen in Isaiah 40:22. Automobiles are seen in Joel 2:3,4, airplanes in Isaiah 31:5 and 60:8, and submarines in Revelation 11:3-12.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

These assertions were not the intent of the authors. Therefore, we must be careful about how much science we find in Scripture.

Summary To Question 40

Does The Bible Foresee Modern Scientific Discoveries?

The fact that the Bible foresees modern science is another evidence of its divine inspiration. How else can we explain the references to scientific matters that were done years ahead of their time?

Furthermore, why didn't the biblical writers repeat the common unscientific errors of their day? The answer is simple. The Creator Himself divinely inspired the writings of Scripture.

Question 41

What Should We Conclude About the Bible And Its Views on Science?

Unbelieving science has no ultimate answers to questions of the origin and meaning of life. Concerning the origin of the universe, scientist Robert Jastrow wrote:

Now we would like to pursue that inquiry further back in time, but the barrier to further progress seems insurmountable. It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is able to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries (Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1978, p. 113).

There is no need to be ashamed of holding to a belief in God as Creator. Though the person who believes in creation may not have every answer to questions of evolutionary scientists, they do have sufficient answers.

If one wishes to put their faith in the God of the Bible, they can do so with intelligent faith that is based upon the best available evidence. No one has to “assassinate their brains” to be a believer in the God of the Bible.

Some Conclusions We Can Make

The evidence, both biblical and scientific, points to a Creator who is the God of the Bible. This being the case we can make the following conclusions.

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

1. **God Does Exist**

The existence of God is clear from both biblical and scientific evidence. The world around us testifies to the existence, power and love of God. The Bible says:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork (Psalm 19:1 ESV).

The evidence for His existence is indeed everywhere.

2. **God Has Spoken**

The Bible says that God exists and has spoken to us. Without divine revelation, we would not know the difference between ourselves and animals. Fortunately, God has given us the answers in His Word.

3. **Life Has A Purpose**

Instead of life being meaningless, we now discover there is a purpose for our existence. We can have a relationship with the true and living God through His Son Jesus Christ.

4. **Salvation Has Been Provided By Jesus Christ**

The separation from the presence of God that sin has caused has been overcome by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He has provided salvation and eternal life to those who put their trust in Him.

5. **There Is Hope For The Future**

The Bible provides genuine hope for the future. Because Christ died and rose from the dead, we all have hope for a life beyond the grave. For the believer, death leads to glory.

God's Questions To Humanity

The late astronomer Carl Sagan was famous for making the statement, "The cosmos is all there was, is or ever will be."

The Bible and Science: Are They in Conflict?

This is a statement of faith. The Bible records questions that God has given to scientists like Sagan who make such assertions:

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone (Job 38:4-6 NIV).

In a similar vein Jesus asked:

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (John 3:12 ESV).

It is clear that the only reliable answers concerning the meaning of our existence are found in the Bible. The Creator of the universe has revealed Himself in Scripture so that the entire world may know who He is and what He expects from them.

A final question we leave with the reader is simple: Do you know Him personally?

**Our Next Book: *In The Beginning: The Creation and The Fall*
(Genesis 1-3)**

Now that we have examined in some detail the biblical doctrine of creation as opposed to the atheistic belief in Darwinian evolution (volume 1), as well as specific questions in which the Bible deals with matters of science (volume 2), we will move on to the third volume of our series.

In it, we will answer specific questions that arise from the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. They include the following:

How Could There Have Been Light Before The Sun?

How Were The Stars To Be Used As Signs?

Where Was The Garden Of Eden? Can Its Location Ever Be Found?

Did God Give Adam And Eve An Unfair Test In The Garden Of Eden?

What Would Have Happened If Adam And Eve Did Not Sin?

These, as well as the other important questions in these chapters, will provide answers to what Scripture specifically says about our beginnings.

About The Author

Don Stewart is a graduate of Biola University and Talbot Theological Seminary (with the highest honors).

Don is a best-selling and award-winning author having authored, or co-authored, over seventy books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies. His available books can be found on his website www.educatingourworld.com.

He also hosts the live television program “Breaking News” five days a week on His Channel (www.hischannel.com).

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website educatingourworld.com provides free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe. Currently there are 59 books on the site in PDF form, totaling about 13,000 pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions. Eventually we hope to record all the books, as well as translating the material in other languages