

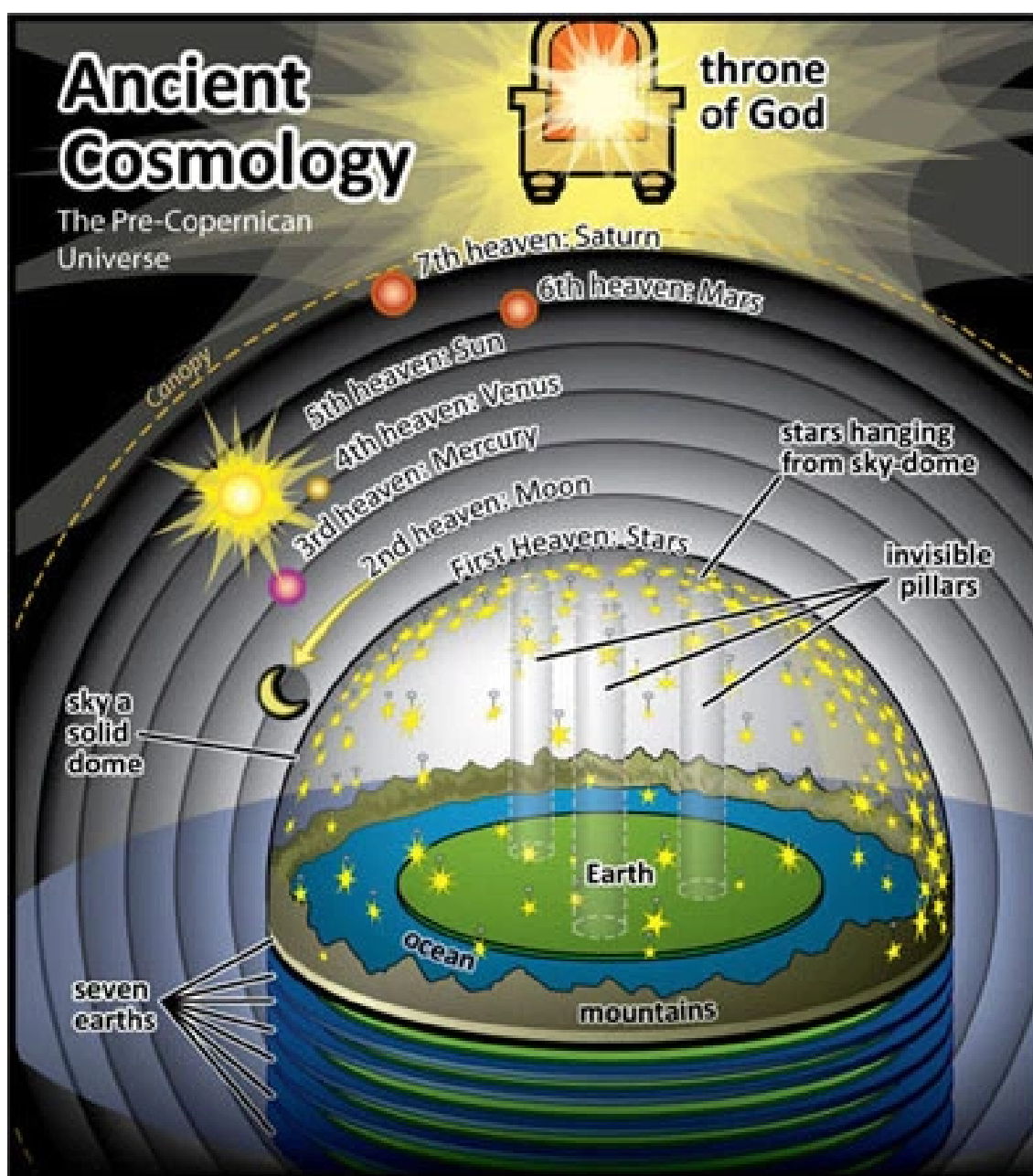
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A flat earth teaching in a perfect book?

18 Thursday Oct 2012

POSTED BY ALOISI2 IN HISTORY, RELIGION

≈ 5 COMMENTS



The mindset of those bronze aged tent dwellers who wrote the Bible was such that “In early Egyptian and Mesopotamian thought, the world was portrayed as a flat disk floating in the ocean. . .

The Hebrew Bible used poetic language consistent with that of the ancient Middle Eastern cosmology. . .”

-Wikipedia

“The Bible is, from Genesis to Revelation, a flat-earth book.

This is hardly surprising though as the ancient Hebrews had the Egyptians to the southwest and the Babylonians to the northeast. Both civilizations had flat-earth cosmologies. The Biblical cosmology closely parallels the Sumero-Babylonian cosmology, and it may also draw upon Egyptian cosmology.

The Babylonian universe was shaped like a modern domed stadium. The Babylonians considered the earth essentially flat, with a continental mass surrounded by ocean. The vault of the sky was a physical object resting upon the ocean’s waters (and perhaps also upon pillars). The Egyptian universe was also enclosed, but it was rectangular instead of round. What was the Hebrew view of the universe?”

Matthew quotes Jesus as saying that the queen of Sheba came from “the ends of the earth...”

So was that just a saying as it is today, like some would claim? Or is that an idiom that can only be understood in it’s historical context? We must try to hear the Biblical text against the background, the literary, cultural and historical time, from which it was written.

Ancient people were very good at observing the physical properties of the earth without necessarily understanding how all of those properties worked. Ancient people of 2,000 or 1,000 BC obviously did not have our modern scientific knowledge, yet they developed perceptions of the physical world based on observations. These observations were certainly not scientific, but practical, based on what they could observe, simply by looking at the earth and sky.

People of the Ancient Near East conceptualized the world as a large, flat, circular disk anchored in water below (“the deep” as in Prov 8:27, Gen 1:2, 49:25, etc.) and by pillars or foundations (1 Sam 2:8, Prov 8:29, etc.). Between the earth and this deep was Sheol, the place of the dead. The earth was covered by a “firmament,” conceived as a large solid upside down bowl or “dome” (Job 22:14, 37:18), in which the stars were placed (Gen 1:14-20). Above the dome was also clouds, which was the source of rain/water.

(Gen 1:7, Job 22:14)

The dome had “doors” and “windows” to let the waters above fall to the earth (Gen 7:11, Isa 24:18, Mal 3:10, etc.). God was described as ruling the world from his throne above the dome (Psa 33, Psa 113:4-6, Matt 5:34, etc.).

The “edge” or “end” of the earth (Deut 13:7, 1 Sam 2:10, Job 28:24, Psa 48:10, Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 44:13, Job 26 etc.) was literal and not just a figure of speech as we may use it today. The uneducated and common belief was in a flat earth. Although some wise men may have believed it to have been round in other more advanced cultures, it is pretty common knowledge, and obvious by the text when you understand it, that the Hebrews didn’t have knowledge of that.

Some Christians, in defense of the Bible, will claim that the verse in Job 26:10, “He inscribed a circle on the surface of the water at the boundary between light and darkness,” is showing that the earth is illuminated from the side, half of it is dark, half is light. “A circle could then be drawn around the earth at this boundary between darkness and light. . .” to prove they knew about the roundness of the earth. . .or you can think of a flat world that is illuminated, with a line drawn by a compass, after which everything dropped off the edge into the “outer darkness” of space. Seems a lot more simple of an explanation to me. . .



Most modern translators also agree that this “circle” in relation to the world, is the noun *מְחֻזָּק* referring to a “circle instrument,” a device used *to make a circle*. . . and that is the same word used when different verses discuss “circles” to do with the earth. . .they always refer to a compass drawing, compass or horizon of the flat earth.

Plus it’s just more logical to read it that way, as the Hebrew word for “ball” could have been used instead of “circle” if they were going for a round or spherical Earth. Christians like to point to the fact that the Hebrews didn’t have a word for the English “round” or “sphere”, and while true, “ball” would have sufficed.

These references to a flat earth are not just isolated anomalies amidst an otherwise scientific grasp of the world. These naive conceptions are pervasive throughout the biblical narratives, not only in describing the physical world, (sun, moon, stars, earth.) but extended into metaphorical applications relating to many other topics or even simply as ways to talk about the world and God. Numerous more [here](#). Funny thing, most every other argument for why the Bible writers were not wrong in their science, are excusing the writers, based on their lack of information of the time, (As in [this guys thoughts](#) on the rabbits that chewed the cud, the bat being called a bird, the mustard seed not being the smallest seed because they would have only planted garden seed, it being invariably the woman’s fault if children weren’t conceived. . .that one was still a popular belief in the time of Henry IIV, or his 7 infertile wives would have likely been spared.) and yet some people still pretend that the Bible writers were somehow privy to knowledge of an almost unknown science of the time; a spherical earth.

Thus they insist that an all knowing God allowed ignorance to make it in the Bible sometimes, (to apparently humor the culture with what they understood), but other times they say that the writers were above it’s culture’s knowledge, and the Bible was written by a God still applicable to our culture today . . . Considering that many of the writers even claimed to be uneducated, isn’t it kind of unlikely that they would know some secret science ahead of their time? And even if some of the writers did know about the earth being a sphere, isn’t it then “speaking out of both sides of your mouth” to then claim the culture’s ignorance is fine when it comes to the rest of the bad science in the Bible? Why not just admit that Biblical science was all around ignorant? Well, it’s one thing to fudge on terms of classification (of a bat being a bird to them simply because it could fly) and technicalities (of how a rabbit could still be considered to chew its cud, by occasionally eating its own droppings. . .etc.), but it’s quite another thing to call God wrong. If you weren’t trying so desperately hard to justify the Bible as “God’s infallible

word”, you could see just how foolish these excuses seem. And there are many more excuses as well, that are discussed and shot down [here](#).

So It seems pretty obvious to me that the Bible writers believed in a basic flat earth, and were behind in their science. . .but wait you say, there’s more! Maybe God meant the Universe was flat?! We just apparently found out that it is flat. . .so there, God must still be a logical belief, right?. . .Source: [here](#).

While it is shockingly still possible to dig up a reason to justify what you have already made up your mind to believe, if you start from scratch and first ask, “why did I believe the Bible in the first place?” you would never come up with such contradictory and desperate grasping at straws for your reasoning. (It’s called brainwashing.)

Or I could quote the guy at [no forbidden questions](#) and say, “The most charitable interpretation I can come up with to explain all the scientific errors in the Bible is that God didn’t want humanity to know the truth, that God was telling deliberate falsehoods in order to mislead us or at least keep us in the dark. After all, this isn’t definitive proof that God does not exist or that God is not omniscient; all it shows us is that the Bible contains many false statements, which an omniscient God might have decided to put there deliberately (leaving us with a text that looks suspiciously like what ancient, pre-scientific people might have made up to explain the world they observed). But at that point, if you’ve acknowledged that God might be lying outright and purposely sowing confusion, what basis is there for believing anything else he’s said? What basis is there to believe in him at all, when the only (already flimsy and question-begging) bit of evidence for him is this lie-filled text itself?”

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thoughts on “A flat earth teaching in a perfect book?”

said: [TWF](#)

October 18, 2012 at 9:50 pm

This is something which really stood out to me as well when I read the Bible. It seemed pretty obvious that it was describing a flat earth.

Other excuses I've heard are that it was just metaphorical language (which just happened to correspond to the flat-earth beliefs at that time!) or that God dumbed it down for the people back then, who just would not have been able to understand the scientific complexities of the universe (despite the fact that we have no problem understanding them now and humans were essentially just as intelligent back then, and such a statement by a deity would have propelled astrology along centuries ahead of where it was back then).

REPLY

sa[?]at: Angela

October 19, 2012 at 2:10 pm

I agree, and that some humans (the advanced civilizations some like to refer to as aliens. . .) humans were as intelligent as us. But archaeology tells us that the Hebrews weren't some of them. After reading the Bible, I can understand why Hitler thought it was an improvement on the DNA of the species to wipe them out.:

REPLY

sa[?]at: Michelle Dufrene

October 29, 2012 at 9:47 pm

Here's an interesting article from the other side

No, this false idea is not taught in Scripture.

Some Bible critics have claimed that Revelation 7:1 assumes a flat earth since the verse refers to angels standing at the "four corners" of the earth. Actually, the reference is to the cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. Similar terminology is often used today when we speak of the sun's rising and setting, even though the earth, not the sun, is doing the moving. Bible writers used the "language of appearance," just as people always have. Without it, the intended message would be awkward at best and probably not understood clearly. [DD]

In the Old Testament, Job 26:7 explains that the earth is suspended in space, the obvious comparison being with the spherical sun and moon. [DD]

A literal translation of Job 26:10 is "He described a circle upon the face of the waters, until the day and night come to an end." A spherical earth is also described in Isaiah 40:21-22—"the circle of the earth."

Note, the Biblical Hebrew word for "circle" (גוּג—chuwg) can also mean "round" or "sphere."

"The Earth a Sphere—Certain astronomical relations were recognized very early. The stars appear as if attached to a globe rotating round the earth once in 24 hours, and this appearance was clearly familiar to the author of the Book of Job, and indeed long before the time of Abraham, since the formation of the constellations could not have been effected without such recognition. But the spherical form of the heavens almost involves a similar form for the earth, and their apparent diurnal rotation certainly means that they are not rigidly connected with the earth, but surround it on all

sides at some distance from it. The earth therefore must be freely suspended in space, and so the Book of Job describes it: 'He stretcheth out the north over empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing' (Job 26:7)." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)]

Proverbs 8:27 also suggests a round earth by use of the word circle (e.g., New King James Bible and New American Standard Bible). If you are overlooking the ocean, the horizon appears as a circle. This circle on the horizon is described in Job 26:10. The circle on the face of the waters is one of the proofs that the Greeks used for a spherical earth. Yet here it is recorded in Job, ages before the Greeks discovered it. Job 26:10 indicates that where light terminates, darkness begins. This suggests day and night on a spherical globe. [JSM]

The Hebrew record is the oldest, because Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible. Historians generally [wrongly] credit the Greeks with being the first to suggest a spherical earth. In the sixth century B.C., Pythagoras suggested a spherical earth. [JSM]

Eratosthenes of Alexandria (circa 276 to 194 or 192 B.C.) calculated the circumference of the earth "within 50 miles of the present estimate." [Encyclopedia Britannica]

The Greeks also drew meridians and parallels. They identified such areas as the poles, equator, and tropics. This spherical earth concept did not prevail; the Romans drew the earth as a flat disk with oceans around it. [JSM]

The round shape of our planet was a conclusion easily drawn by watching ships disappear over the horizon and also by observing eclipse shadows, and we can assume that such information was well known to New Testament writers. Earth's spherical shape was, of course, also understood by Christopher Columbus. [DD]

The implication of a round earth is seen in the book of Luke, where Jesus described his return, Luke 17:31. Jesus said, "In that day," then in verse 34, "In that night." This is an allusion to light on one side of the globe and darkness on the other simultaneously. [JSM]

It is also interesting to note that there are 16 scriptures which refer to God stretching out the heavens. These are remarkable confirmations that the Bible is true, as we know today that the heavens are rapidly expanding. [TH]

REPLY

sa#:Angela

November 2, 2012 at 12:48 am

The thing is, while I found stuff to easily debunk all of that in my research for this article, I don't feel like justifying myself, as it is common knowledge that all people, but maybe the top "scientists" from advanced civilizations (which the bible writers were not a part of by any stretch) in those days believed in a flat earth. The funny thing is though, I could just as easily have agreed that they were right to think it was flat, and would be having no issue with it. You on the other hand will fight that the Bible proved a round earth, and then if it became out of vogue to think that, you would simply change your reading of the Bible and claim it said that! (This is such a typical thing in religion.) When you have such cop outs that you can't be wrong either way, there is no use reasoning with you on anything, so I will not bother. Cheers.

REPLY

said: Angela

November 2, 2012 at 6:05 pm

When you prove yourself unteachable with such a cop out mentality, (as is obvious by statements like “No, this false idea is not taught in Scripture.”) it becomes painfully obvious that you misunderstand a basic truth about life; what we read has to be put through a filter of our understanding and biases, and can never be claimed to say anything in and of itself, unless it's agreed upon by a clear majority. So being that you clearly don't understand mythology, the time of the Bible, or the language of it, and yet based on your reading and perception alone, you have the gall to say your perception of the Bible's teaching, (though hotly debated by “Godly” Christian men) is something you know! That is arrogant, considering nearly all the people educated in all those areas disagree with you.

REPLY

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