

WORKSHOP ON ASTRONOMY IN THE BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

Is religion, like music or food, a matter of taste?
Each religion claims to tell us how things **really** are.
Only Christianity offers **much evidence** to support its claims.
Here we compare Biblical statements in several areas of astronomy with those
of various ancient writers and with modern science.

THE UNIVERSE HAD A BEGINNING

Bible:

Genesis 1; Ps 19:1-4; Rom 1:18-20; Col 1:15-16; Heb 11:3

Other Ancient Sources:

Nearly all see the universe with a beginning (except some Greek
philosophers).

But nearly all see matter as having always existed.

Modern Science:

The history of cosmology in the past century has been a struggle to avoid
the mounting evidence that the universe had a beginning.

How did the Bible get it right, and why do so many scientists want to avoid this
conclusion?

THE UNIVERSE IS DESIGNED

Bible:

Genesis 1-2; Job 38; Proverbs 8; Jer 10:12

Ancient Sources:

Some have personal beings involved in some aspects of creation, but
for others creation seems to be just there.

Some of the Greek philosophers saw a Designer behind nature; others
thought our Cosmos was an accidental product of Chaos.

Modern Science;

The phenomena related to the recent discussions of the "anthropic
principle" point strongly to a Designer behind nature.

The natural reading of the data is that there is a Designer responsible for the
"fine tuning" in nature.

THE UNIVERSE IS RUNNING DOWN

Bible:

Psa 102:25-27; Hebrew 1; poss 2 Pet 3:10-13

Ancient Sources:

Various views: universe degrading (mythical ages of mankind), recycling

(Hindu), eternal (Aristotle)

Modern Science:

Entropy, etc., point to running down universe.

Disagreement on whether it will end with a bang or a whimper.

THE SIZE OF THE UNIVERSE

Bible:

Ps 8:3-4: amazing to Psalmist that God cares about man

Jer 31:37: heavens immeasurable

Koran:

Sura 2: earth a bed, sky a dome

Sura 22: holds sky from falling down

Sura 34: let a part fall

Anaximander, *About Nature*:

sun most distant object, about 28x size of earth away

so universe about 28x size of earth

Modern Science:

objects apparently 10 billion light years away

(1 light year = 6 trillion miles)

no end in sight

THE NUMBER OF STARS

Bible:

Gen 15:5: large number

Jer 33:22, Gen 22:17: uncountable, like sand

Hipparchus, Ptolemy:

ancient catalogues, about 1000 stars

(only about 6000 visible without telescope)

Democritus:

speculated there are an infinite number of worlds

Modern Science:

100s of billions of stars in each of billions of galaxies

Sir James Jeans, *The Stars in Their Courses*, 137:

no. of stars like no. of grains of sand in all oceans of earth

THE EARTH'S SUPPORT

Bible:

Job 26:7: earth hangs on nothing

Hindu Vedas:

earth flat & triangular

7 stages: honey, sugar, butter, wine, etc.

supported by elephants

Greek mythology:

Atlas holds the earth up

Greek philosophers: earth supported by

water (Thales)
air (Anaxagoras)
nothing (Anaximander, contra Aristotle)
Modern Science:
support is by non-material, invisible forces
a balance of gravity and inertia

THE EARTH'S SHAPE

Bible:
Job 26:10: boundary between light and darkness on earth's surface is a circle
Luke 17:34-36: different times of day in different places
Greek philosophers:
flat (Hecataios)
pillar-shaped (Anaximander)
round (Pythagoras)

CONCLUSIONS

Have to postulate very lucky guesses to avoid Biblical evidence

Did the Jews have some innate ability to pre-know science?
Hardly! Consider ancient Jewish attempts to write Scripture:
1 Enoch 72:3-7: sun's chariot, gates, winds
3 Baruch 3:6-8: bore thru heaven's dome

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