

Ancient Science in the Bible

THE BIBLE IS A precious gift given to us in order to reveal God and His will. Contained within its pages are the foundations of the Christian faith—the creation of the world, the fall of humanity into sin, the offer of redemption through the Blood shed on the Cross, and the promise of eternal life. The Scriptures are also an everlasting source of spiritual nourishment for our soul. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible assures and encourages, challenges and admonishes, and equips men and women for a faithful life of good works. Most importantly, the primary purpose of God’s Word is to reveal Jesus and the Father’s unfathomable love for all of us.

Church history shows us that Christians have not only consulted Scripture for spiritual matters, but have also used it in order to understand the structure, operation, and origin of the world. Scientific concordism has been a prominent feature in theological discussions throughout the ages. As noted previously, the belief that there is an accord or correspondence between the Bible and science is a very reasonable expectation, since God is both the Author of His Words and the Creator of His Works. But the questions must be asked: Is scientific concordism true? Does the science in Scripture actually align with modern scientific evidence? And if scientific concordism is false, does this undermine the Christian faith?

Personally, I completely appreciate and understand Christians who are scientific concordists. They love Scripture and they have a wonderful faith. In fact, I fiercely defended scientific concordism for nearly ten years. When I came to Christ, it was through reading the gospel of John as a literal account of actual events, and the spiritual messages changed my life forever. It made perfect sense then to use this same literal approach with the accounts of origins in the book of Genesis. Consequently, I soon

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became a young earth creationist. But please note: God descended to my level and met me where I happened to be at that point in my life—an atheist trapped in the origins dichotomy. To me, being a Christian meant rejecting evolution and accepting a literal reading of Gen 1–3. At that time, my university education was limited to dentistry, and I did not have any training in reading the biblical origins accounts. However, this speaks of the amazing power of the Word of God. You do not need a specialized education in theology to know Jesus. You just need to get down on your knees and open Scripture, and you will meet the Lord.

God eventually called me to graduate school in theology, and it was quite a shock, to say the least. My love for Jesus never changed one little bit, but my knowledge of statements about the physical world in Scripture changed dramatically. The best way to introduce this interpretive approach is to consider the Lord's parable of the mustard seed. He asked His disciples:

With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is *the smallest of all the seeds on the earth*; yet it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.

Mark 4:30–32 (my italics)¹

As everyone knows, the mustard seed is not “the smallest of all seeds on the earth.” Orchid seeds are much smaller, to cite just one example. Yet perceived through the eyes of ancient people in the Lord's day, mustard seeds were the smallest seeds. That is, from their point of view, or better, from their *ancient phenomenological perspective* (Greek *phainōmenon*: appearance), this was a scientific fact for them. Of course, most Christians understand that Jesus' purpose in this parable is not to teach botany. Rather, He uses the science-of-the-day in order to reveal an inerrant prophecy about the kingdom of God. In other words, the Lord descended and accommodated to the level of His ancient listeners.

Fig 3-1 presents the Message-Incident Principle for the interpretation of biblical passages that refer to the physical world. This approach contends that in order to reveal spiritual truths as effectively as possible to ancient people, the Holy Spirit employed their understanding of nature, which was based on an ancient phenomenological perspective. Instead of confusing or distracting the biblical writers and their readers with modern scientific concepts, God came down to their level and used the science-



Fig 3-1. The Message-Incident Principle

of-their-day. This is exactly what Jesus did in the mustard seed parable. Therefore, passages in Scripture that deal with the physical world feature both a *Message of Faith* and an *incidental ancient science*. According to this interpretive principle, biblical inerrancy rests in Divine Theology, and not in statements referring to nature. Qualifying ancient science as “incidental” does not mean that it is unimportant. The science in Scripture is vital for transporting the spiritual truths. It acts as a cup or vessel that delivers “living waters” (John 4:10). However, the word incidental carries meanings of “that which happens to be alongside” and “happening in connection with something more important.” In other words, the ancient science in Scripture is “alongside” the “more important” Message of Faith.

This chapter embraces the following assumption: As the Word of God judges our thoughts and remodels our mind (Heb 4:12; Rom 12:1–2), features like the ancient science in Scripture help us to evaluate and reshape our view of how the Holy Spirit revealed through the inspired biblical writers. By using an inductive Bible study method, I will offer evidence that an ancient phenomenological perspective of the structure and operation of the physical world appears throughout Scripture. The presence of ancient science certainly has significant implications, especially for the origins debate. If the Word of God features an ancient view of nature, then the popular Christian belief in scientific concordism must be reconsidered. Stated more precisely, if there is an ancient science regarding the structure and operation of the world, then consistency argues that there is also an ancient science of origins. Should this be the case, we would

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need to re-think our use of the Bible in understanding how God actually created the universe and life.

READING SCRIPTURE THROUGH ANCIENT EYES

A simple thought experiment introduces the challenge of interpreting biblical passages that refer to the physical world. Consider the first two verses of Scripture, and then envision the scene that is described. Genesis 1:1–2 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Most people picture a dark, watery, and chaotic setting that features a *spherical* earth. That is, when reading the word “earth,” they automatically envision a globe. But is this the biblical understanding of the earth’s structure? Or are people reading their twenty-first century science *into* the Bible, rather than allowing God’s Word to speak for itself? A few facts from Scripture answer these questions.

First, the use of the word earth in the Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit did not intend to reveal modern scientific information about the structure of the world. It appears about 2500 times in the Old Testament (*’eres*) and 250 times in the New Testament (*gē*).² Never once is the earth referred to as spherical. Nor is a spherical shape implied by the context of any passage.* Indeed, if it was God’s purpose to reveal in Scripture the scientific fact that the earth is a sphere, then there were 2750 opportunities to do so. He could easily have done this by comparing the earth to something round, like a ball or an orange. Surely, if it were the Lord’s intention to reveal science in the Bible, then we would expect Him to tell us something about the structure of the home that He made for us. But He never did. This scriptural evidence argues that scientific concordism was not the goal of the Holy Spirit in biblical revelation.

Second, to the surprise of most Christians, the Bible presents a 3-tiered universe, indicating that the inspired ancient authors believed the earth was flat. One of the most important passages in the New Testament is the Kenotic Hymn (Greek *kenōō*: to empty, pour out), and it features this view of the structure of the cosmos. Highlighting the fact that God emptied Himself and came down to the level of humans in the person of Jesus, the apostle Paul writes:

* Some readers might be quick to argue that Job 26:7 and Isa 40:22 imply that the earth is spherical. These verses are dealt with later in the chapter on p. 63.

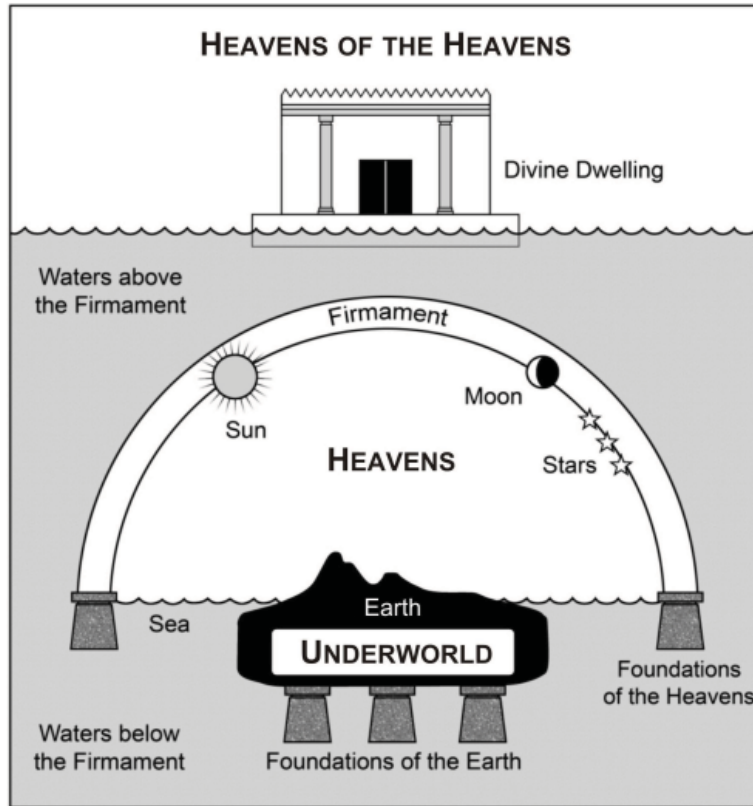


Fig 3-2. The 3-Tier Universe. Drawn by Kenneth Kully

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, *in heaven* and *on earth* and *under the earth*, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5–11 (my italics)

Ancient peoples understood the universe to be made up of three actual and *physical* levels: (1) the heavenly realm, (2) the earthly world, and (3) the underworld. Fig 3-2 presents this conceptualization of the structure

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of the cosmos, and it will be explained in detail in the next section of this chapter. Today, Christians rarely recognize the incidental ancient science in Phil 2, but they correctly focus on the central Messages of Faith—the mystery of the Incarnation and the lordship of Jesus over the entire creation.

Of course, many Christians are quick to offer two common arguments against this 3-tier universe interpretation of Phil 2. First, they point out that this passage is in poetic form and contend that the world is not being described in actual or concrete terms. That is, figurative expressions are being employed, and consequently do not depict physical reality. Certainly, caution is necessary when interpreting the many poetic passages in Scripture, but this is not to say that poetry never refers to actual realities in nature. For example, Ps 148:3 features a poetic structure and states, “Praise the Lord, sun and moon, praise Him, all you shining stars.” No one today doubts the existence of the sun, moon, and stars, and no one in the ancient world questioned the reality of these astronomical bodies either. Therefore, the *poetic language argument* must be applied carefully. Modern readers of Scripture need to determine what the biblical authors believed regarding the physical world before writing off a passage as simply “poetic.”*

The second popular response to the interpretation that Phil 2 refers to a 3-tier universe is the *phenomenological language argument*. It asserts that Paul is describing the cosmos from his viewpoint, or phenomenological perspective. That is, the world “looks” or “appears” to have three tiers. So, in the same way that we now speak of the “rising” or “setting” of the sun, the apostle is using phenomenological language. According to this line of reasoning, Phil 2 does not affirm the reality of a world with three tiers. But there is a serious and subtle error in this argument. Did Paul use phenomenological language in the way that we do today? Would he agree with us if we told him that the so-called “rising” and “setting” of the sun are only visual effects caused by the rotation of our spherical planet? History reveals that Paul would disagree. The notion that the earth rotates

* It must also be pointed out that real historical people and events can appear in poetic passages. For example, the psalms are set in poetic frameworks and refer to Israel (65 times), David (14), and Moses (7). Christians do not dismiss these references as merely “poetic” and not corresponding to historical reality. Similarly, the writing off of Phil 2 because it appears in a poetic structure renders the kenosis of Jesus vulnerable to rejection. I doubt any Christian would want to do that.

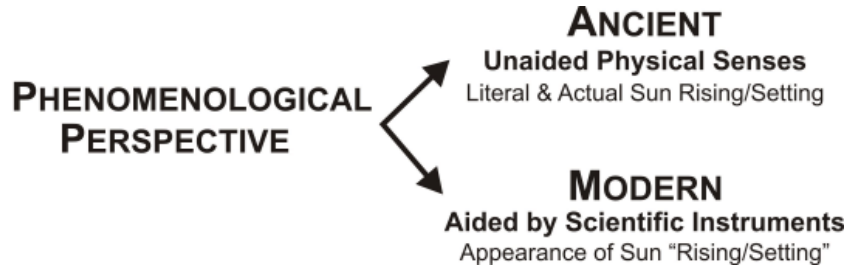


Fig 3-3. Categories of Phenomenological Perspective

daily on its axis causing the phenomenon of the sun to “rise” and “set” became accepted only in the 1600s after the work of Galileo.

Scripture does indeed employ phenomenological language to describe the natural world. But there is a critical and subtle difference between what the biblical writers saw and believed to be real in the universe, and what we today see and know to be a scientific fact. Observation in the ancient world was limited to unaided human senses, like the naked eye. But today scientific instruments, like telescopes, have broadened our view of the universe. As a result, it is essential to understand that statements in Scripture about nature are from an *ancient phenomenological perspective*. What the biblical writers and other ancient peoples saw with their eyes, they believed to be real, like the literal rising and setting of the sun. In contrast, we view the world from a *modern phenomenological perspective*. When we see the sun “rising” and “setting,” we know that it is only an appearance or visual effect caused by the rotation of the earth. Therefore, it is crucial that these different viewpoints of nature not be confused and conflated. This is the problem with the popular phenomenological language argument—it reads the ancient science in Scripture through a modern perspective and mindset. Fig 3-3 distinguishes between ancient and modern phenomenological perspectives.

The Kenotic Hymn in Phil 2 can now be seen in a new light. When Paul wrote this passage he understood the structure of the universe from an ancient phenomenological perspective. Like most people at that time, unaided human senses led him to believe that the cosmos was literally made up of three actual and physical tiers. In other words, this apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, employed the incidental science of his generation in order to declare the inerrant Messages of Faith that God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus to become a servant, and

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that the Father made Him Lord over the entire creation. Similar to Jesus' use of the mustard seed, Paul's intention in this passage is not to inform Christians of the structure of the physical world. It just happens to be that at the time he wrote this letter to the Philippian church, the 3-tier universe was his understanding of nature, and that of his readers. And like the central mystery revealed in the Kenotic Hymn, the Holy Spirit descended and humbled Himself by using ancient human ideas about nature in the revelatory process. Thus, ancient science is a vessel that helps to deliver Divine Theology in Scripture.

The challenge twenty-first century Christians face in reading the Bible is demonstrated by the way most people envision the shape of the earth in Gen 1:1–2. We are immersed in a scientific culture, surrounded by images of a spherical planet. The moment we see the word “earth” in this verse, a picture of a globe suspended in outer space immediately comes to mind, because we instinctively filter information through our intellectual categories. More precisely, we unconsciously read our modern science *into* the Bible. This interpretive error is termed eisegesis (Greek *eis*: in, into; *ēgeomai*: to guide). But everyone agrees that the goal of reading any text is to practice exegesis (*ek*: out, out of) and to draw *out* the author's intended meaning. Therefore, in order to understand biblical statements dealing with nature correctly, we need to suspend our scientific categories and attempt to think about the physical world like an ancient person thousands of years ago. In other words, we need to read Scripture through ancient eyes. No doubt about it, this is a very counterintuitive way to read.

THE 3-TIER UNIVERSE

In order to become comfortable with this counterintuitive reading approach to Scripture, I have found it helpful to focus on biblical passages that refer to the structure and operation of the earth and heavens. Today everyone knows that we live on a spherical planet that rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun. However, a careful examination of God's Word reveals that the inspired writers accepted a stationary universe with three tiers—the heavens above, the earth in between, and the underworld below (Fig 3-2). More specifically, the Bible views the physical world from an ancient phenomenological perspective, featuring an ancient geology and an ancient astronomy.

This section outlines nine basic characteristics of the 3-tier universe found in Scripture. Each section underlines the very logical process be-

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hind the conceptualization of the ancient science. We would have held the very same views about the natural world had we lived at that time. The biblical passages that are presented are also interpreted in light of the Message-Incident Principle. It will become obvious that ancient science plays an essential role in transporting the inerrant Word of God.

The Immobility of the Earth

Ancient geology assumed that the earth did not move. This is a reasonable idea from an ancient phenomenological perspective. Does anyone today sense that we are rotating on the earth's axis at 1,000 miles per hour and traveling around the sun at 65,000 mph? This phenomenon of immobility is so powerful that belief in a stationary earth was widely upheld until the 1600s. In fact, hard scientific evidence that the earth moved was only discovered in the 1800s with the construction of telescopes that could detect our movement through space.

The Old Testament clearly presents the immovability of the earth. Three verses repeat word-for-word, "The world is firmly established; it cannot move" (1 Chr 16:30; Pss 93:1, 96:10). Over twenty-five times, biblical writers use engineering terms like foundations and pillars to conceptualize the earth's stability. For example, Ps 104:5 states that, "God set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved" (cf. 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 75:3; Job 38:4-6). The ancient Hebrews saw that mountains, hills, and plains remained constant throughout their lifetime, and they logically reasoned within their ancient intellectual category set that the earth was stationary. But more importantly, these passages reveal a Message of Faith. This incidental ancient geology delivers the inerrant revelation that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world.

The Circumferential Sea and the Circular Earth

Ancient Near Eastern peoples thought that the earth was a circular island surrounded by a circumferential sea. Two phenomenological factors led to this idea. First, the constant visual impact of the horizon gives the impression that the world is enclosed within a circular boundary. Second, it was common knowledge at this time that journeys in any direction eventually led to a body of water. An appreciation of the geography in the region makes such a conclusion reasonable: the Mediterranean Sea is west, the Black and Caspian Seas are north, the Persian Gulf is east, and the

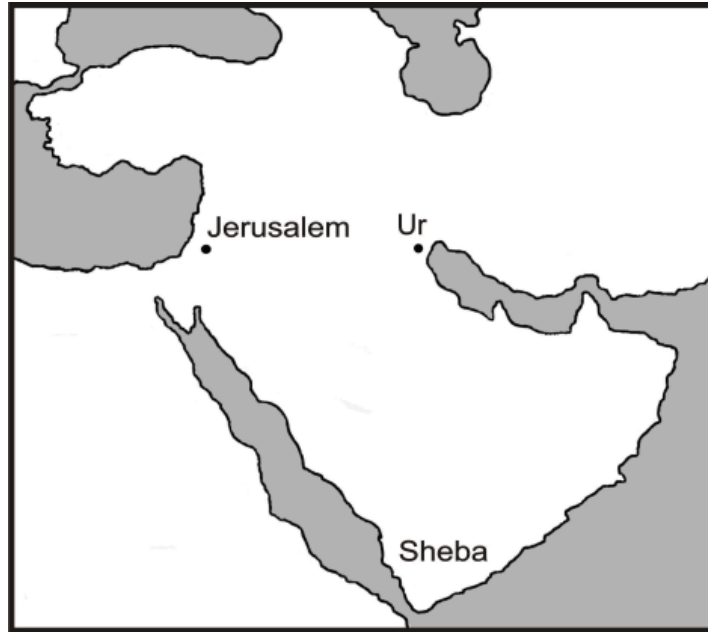


Fig 3-4. Geography of Ancient Near East

Arabian and Red Seas are south (Fig 3-4). A sixth-century BC Babylonian map of the world confirms the ancient notion of a sea encompassing a circular earth (Fig 3-5).

The circumferential sea is implied in Scripture. Proverbs 8:22–31 and Job 26:7–14 describe the creation of the world. The former states, “God inscribed a circle on the face of the deep” (v. 27); and the latter, “God has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters” (v. 10). The Hebrew word translated as circle (*hûg*) refers to a two-dimensional geometric figure. It is sometimes rendered in English Bibles as horizon or compass, indicating a flat surface. Undoubtedly, Prov 8:27 and Job 26:10 depict the opening scene in the Bible when “darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2). Therefore, instead of beginning with a sphere of water enveloping a global earth, as eisegetically pictured by most twenty-first century readers, God starts with a flat surface of water upon which He draws a circle to create the horizon.

In a verse that is well known to Christians, the Bible asserts that the earth is circular. The prophet Isaiah writes, “God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out

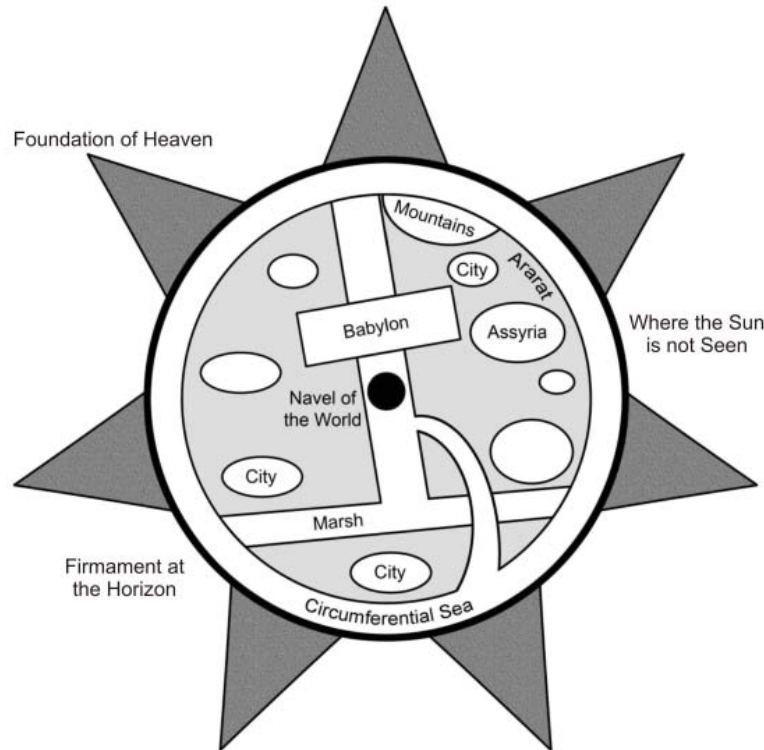


Fig 3-5. Babylonian World Map. This sixth-century BC map presents a flat circular earth bordered by a circumferential sea. The solid dome of heaven (firmament) comes to an end at the horizon and is supported by seven foundations/pillars. Redrawn by Kenneth Kully.

the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in” (Isa 40:22). Again, the Hebrew word translated as circle refers to a two-dimensional flat surface. The context of the verse complements this interpretation. Isaiah compares the universe to a tent that features a domed canopy over a flat floor. Psalms 19:4 and 104:2 also use the tent analogy to describe the structure of the world. Therefore, the correct understanding of Isa 40:22 is that God looks down from heaven and sees the entire earth and its circular border meeting the circumferential sea.

These two ancient geological notions led ancient Near Eastern peoples to believe that the earth literally came to an end at the shore of the great encompassing sea. This ancient science is reflected in Scripture nearly 50 times by the phrase “the ends of the earth.” For example, God called Abraham from Ur, a city that was near the Persian Gulf (Gen 11:31; Heb 11:8). The Lord states, “O Israel My servant, Jacob, whom I have cho-

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sen, you descendants of Abraham My friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, and called you from its remotest parts” (Isa 41:8–9). Of course, the furthest land from Israel on a spherical earth is South America. But if the world was envisioned as an island, then understanding Ur to be at its edge was logical for those living in the ancient Near East. Similarly, in denouncing the “wicked and adulterous generation” of His day, Jesus proclaims, “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now One greater than Solomon is here” (Matt 12:42). The Lord is referring to the Queen of Sheba, whose land was in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula. From an ancient Near Eastern geological perspective, this country was at end of the earth. Fig 3-4 identifies the sites of Ur and Sheba.

Clearly, the purpose of the biblical passages above is not to reveal the structure of the sea and the earth. Proverbs 8:27 and Job 26:10 deliver the Message of Faith that God established the boundaries of the creation. Similarly, Isa 40:22 reveals the spiritual truth that the Creator made the entire universe and that He sees the activities of every person. For Israel, Isa 41:8–9 was a comforting message that the Lord had personally chosen her to be His people. And to the corrupt generation in Jesus’ day, Matt 12:24 was a warning that there will be a final judgment. But at the same time, “One greater than Solomon,” the Son of God Himself, had descended to earth to reveal spiritual truths so that we can live our life with joy and fullness.

The Underside of the Earth and the Underworld

Ancient geology accepted that the earth had an underside and an underworld. Such notions are reasonable; we all experience the phenomena of places that are above and below us. The Old Testament refers to the underworld as *sh^eōl*, and English translations render this Hebrew word as grave, pit, and hell. In 40 of the 65 times that it appears, the context and associated terminology (e.g., going down to, depths of) indicates that *sh^eōl* is below the surface of the earth (Num 16:31–33; Prov 5:5; Isa 14:15). Similarly, the New Testament calls this region *hādes* and it is often translated as hell. In half of the 10 times this Greek word appears, the context presupposes a place below the earth’s surface (Matt 11:23; Luke 10:15; Rev 20:14).

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The New Testament also refers to a region “under the earth.” The apostle John praises, “I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing, ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and power for ever and ever!’” (Rev 5:13; cf., Rev 5:3; Eph 4:9–10). As noted previously in the Kenotic Hymn, Paul writes that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:10). Regrettably, English Bibles do not translate fully the original Greek. “Under the earth” should be rendered “the underworld.” In fact, the Greek word *katachthoniōn* in this verse refers to the beings down (*kata*) in the chthonic (*chthovios*) or subterranean world. A more accurate translation of this verse is: At the name of Jesus every knee should bow—of beings in heaven, of beings on earth, and of beings in the underworld (cf., Matt 12:40; Eph 4:9–10; 1 Pet 3:19). For the biblical writers, the underworld and the underside of the earth were every bit as real as the heaven, earth, and sea. These terms are not poetic figures of speech, nor are they only an “appearance” or merely “phenomenological” as some understand them today.

When we apply the Message-Incident Principle to Phil 2:10 and Rev 5:13, it becomes evident that the purpose of these verses is not to reveal that the universe has three physical tiers. Rather, the Holy Spirit employs ancient scientific concepts that refer to the totality and immensity of the cosmos. The divine revelation in these verses is that Jesus is Lord over every region of the entire creation.

The Flat Earth

The Bible never specifically states that the earth is flat. Rather, scriptural evidence from the terms and contexts of passages indicates that this ancient geological notion was assumed to be a fact by the inspired writers and their readers. In the same way that we see the word earth and automatically visualize a spherical planet, they immediately pictured a flat surface. In light of the ancient geological features presented above, the biblical authors believed that the earth was like a round coffee table with edges, an underside shelf, and stable legs.

The idea that the earth was flat is perfectly logical from an ancient phenomenological perspective. Anyone looking out from an elevated position perceives the world to be a level plain bordered by the horizon. This ancient geology is reflected in the temptation of Jesus. Matthew 4:8 states,

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“Again the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” The Greek word translated into English as “world” is *kosmos*, which literally means the entire universe or sum total of everything that exists. But everyone knows that there were great civilizations in China and the Americas at this time, and no matter how tall this mountain might have been, it was not possible for Jesus to see *all* the kingdoms of the world.

Separating the Message of Faith from the incidental ancient science in Matt 4:8 avoids a needless conflict or contradiction between the Bible and modern geology. The Holy Spirit’s intention was not to reveal earth science in this verse. Rather, God used the geology-of-the-day as a vessel to deliver the inerrant revelation that in taking on our very humanity, Jesus was tempted by the devil in every way that we are. But instead of falling into sin, our Lord and Savior was victorious!

The Daily Movement of the Sun across the Sky

Ancient astronomy assumed that the sun literally crossed the sky each day. Experiencing the phenomenon of the sun traveling from east to west led the biblical writers without hesitation to incorporate this idea into Scripture. As the psalmist proclaims, “The sun rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other” (Ps 19:6). Similarly, King Solomon writes, “The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises” (Eccl 1:5; cf., Ps 50:1). And Jesus accommodated to His listeners by saying that our Father in heaven “causes His sun to rise on evil and good” (Matt 5:45). In total, the Bible makes over 60 references to the sun’s daily movement across the sky.

Of course, no one today accepts that the sun actually rises and sets. Though it certainly looks like it does, our *modern phenomenological perspective* recognizes that this is only an appearance, when in actual fact the earth is rotating on its axis to produce this visual effect. Similarly, our use of the phrases “the setting sun” and “the rising sun” are now poetic and figurative expressions that are informed by modern astronomy. But as noted earlier, in ancient times the physical world was understood through an *ancient phenomenological perspective*. What ancient peoples saw with their eyes, they believed to be literally true. For them, the sun actually moved across the sky and the phrases “the setting sun” and “the rising sun” were concrete facts of nature. In order to deal with this conflict between Scripture and science, the Message-Incident Principle assists us

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in separating this ancient astronomy from the Divine Theology. The purpose of passages that refer to the movement of the sun is to reveal God's creatorship and lordship over the sun, not its position and operation in the heavens.

The Firmament

Ancient astronomers believed that the circular earth and circumferential sea were enclosed by a firm dome overhead. From an ancient phenomenological point of view, the vault of the sky certainly appears to be a solid immovable structure, similar to an inverted bowl. Early English translations of the Bible, like the King James Version, refer to it as "the firmament." For example, on the second day of creation 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'" (Gen 1:6–8). Similarly, the KJV renders Ps 19:1 as "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handywork."

Everyone knows that there is no solid structure above the earth. Some modern translations of the Bible attempt to resolve this conflict between Scripture and science by using the word "expanse" instead of firmament.³ In doing so, they give the impression that on the second creation day God creates a vast empty region, alluding to outer space and the earth's atmosphere. However, this betrays the meaning of the Hebrew word *rāqîa'*. The root of this noun is the verb *rāqa'* which means to flatten, stamp down, spread out, and hammer out. That is, this Hebrew verb carries a sense of flattening something solid rather than opening a broad empty space. Exodus 39:3 and Isa 40:19 use *rāqa'* for pounding metals into thin plates, and Num 16:38 employs the related word *riqqûa'* (broad plate) in a similar context. The verb *rāqa'* is even found in a passage referring to the creation of the sky, which is understood to be a firm surface like a metal. Job 37:18 asks, "Can you join God in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?" (cf., Exod 24:10; Job 22:14; Ezek 1:22).

Early translations of Scripture conserve the original sense of *rāqîa'*. The Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint and dated about 250 BC, renders this Hebrew word as *stereōma*, which means the vault of heaven. This noun is related to the adjective *stereos*, a common term for firm, hard, and solid. The importance of the Septuagint cannot be overstated,

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since New Testament writers often used it in quoting Old Testament passages. Similarly, the Latin translation of the Bible, known as the Vulgate, translates *rāqîa'* as *firmamentum*. This word is related to the adjective *firmus*, from which derives the English word firm. The Latin Bible was written during the fifth century AD and served the Church for over one thousand years. Its impact upon early English translations, like the King James Version, is clear in that they render *rāqîa'* as firmament. Thus, the *traditional* and *conservative* understanding of this Hebrew term, as reflected in the early translations of the Bible, is that God created a solid structure over the earth on the second day of creation.

Being aware of the meaning of the term firmament sheds light on biblical passages that refer to “the foundations/pillars of the heavens” (Job 26:11; 2 Sam 22:8) and “the ends of the heavens” (Deut 4:32; Isa 13:5; Ps 19:6; Matt 24:31). These are reasonable notions from an ancient phenomenological view point. In the eyes of ancient peoples, the firmament did not move. Thus, it must have been placed on something solid and immovable, like the pillars or foundations set down by ancient builders. The visual impact of the horizon also led to the logical conclusion that the dome of heaven had ends (see Fig 3-2). However, the purpose of Scripture is not to reveal the actual structure of the heavens. Rather, by stating that “the firmament proclaims the work of God’s hands” in Ps 19, the Holy Spirit employs an ancient astronomical notion as a vessel to reveal the inerrant theological truth that the heavens reflect intelligent design and point to the Creator.

The Waters Above in the Heavens

Ancient Near Eastern astronomy assumed that the firmament supported a body of water over the earth. As unusual as this notion seems to our twenty-first century scientific mindset, such a conclusion is very logical from an ancient phenomenological perspective. The color of the sky’s dome is a changing blue, similar to a lake or sea. As well, rain falls to the ground from above. These ancient peoples had no way of knowing that the blue of the heavens was a visual effect due to the scattering of short wave light in the upper atmosphere.

The Bible affirms the existence of a heavenly sea. As noted previously, Gen 1:6–8 states that the Creator made a firmament to separate the “waters above” from the “waters below” (the latter being the earthly sea, as named in Gen 1:10). In Ps 104:2–3, “God stretches out the heavens like a

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tent and lays the beams of His upper chambers on their waters” (cf., Ezek 28:2). Calling forth praise from the sun, moon, and stars, Ps 148:4 appeals to this heavenly sea, “Praise the Lord you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.” And Jer 10:12–13 records, “God stretches out the heavens by His understanding. When He thunders, the waters in the heavens roar.” Some Christians attempt to argue that the water mentioned in these passages is water vapor. However, biblical Hebrew has three well-known words (*’ēd*, *nāsī’*, *’ānān*) that refer to mist, vapor, or cloud (Gen 2:6; Jer 10:13; Gen 9:13, respectively), and the inspired writers did not use them in these passages.

The waters above do not correspond to any physical reality known to modern astronomy. This fact directly challenges scientific concordism. But this problem vanishes in light of the Message-Incident Principle. The Holy Spirit accommodated to the ancient astronomy of the Hebrews in order to reveal that God created the visually dominant blue “structure” overhead. And this inerrant divine disclosure remains steadfast for us—the Creator made the phenomenon of the blue sky.

The Sun, Moon, and Stars in the Firmament

Ancient peoples believed that the sun, moon, and stars were set in the firmament. This is another reasonable idea. These astronomical bodies appear to be in front of a blue heavenly sea and positioned in the surface of a structure holding it up. The Bible affirms this ancient astronomy. On the fourth day of creation, God said:

“Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

Genesis 1:14–19

Some Christians attempt to harmonize this passage with modern astronomy. They suggest that the Hebrew word traditionally translated as firmament refers to the expanse of outer space. But as noted previously, this is not the meaning of *rāqīa’*.

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The purpose of the fourth creation day is to reveal a radical theological message to the ancient world. It is a polemic (a cutting critique) against pagan astral religion. Most people at that time believed that the sun, moon, and stars were gods. But the biblical author, through the Holy Spirit, strips these astronomical bodies of their divine status and makes them mere creations of the Hebrew God. Even more radically, the Scripture throws these so-called “gods” into servitude! Instead of men and women serving the heavenly bodies as demanded by astrological religions, the inspired writer states that the sun, moon, and stars were created to serve humanity. In other words, the Bible puts the heavenly bodies in their proper place. They have value because they are God’s good creations, but they are definitely not gods worthy of worship.

Ancient astronomy also assumed that stars are quite small and that they sometimes dislodged from the firmament and fell to the earth. Undoubtedly, their appearance as luminous specks against the night sky, as well as the sighting of a streaking meteor, led to this very rational idea. And it appears in Scripture. Stars both fall to the earth (Isa 34:4; Matt 24:29; Rev 6:13) and can be thrown down to it (Dan 8:10; Rev 12:4). The Bible employs this ancient astronomy to describe the disassembling of the heavens at the end of the world on judgment day. God will shake the firmament, causing the stars to fall to earth, and then He will roll up this heavenly structure. Isaiah envisions the end time in this way: “All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree” (Isa 34:4). Similarly, Jesus prophesies that at “the coming of the Son of Man . . . the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Matt 24:27, 29).

All these Scriptures make perfect sense from an ancient phenomenological point of view. Stars were small enough to fall to the earth, and the firmament, which was depicted as a tent canopy being spread out at the beginning of the world, would be rolled up at the end of time. To be sure, caution is required when interpreting end times passages because they feature poetic language. But this is not to say that everything mentioned in prophecies has no correspondence to the real world, and consequently can be written off as merely figurative. For example, Isa 34 and Matt 24 refer to astronomical realities: heaven, earth, stars, and other heavenly bodies. No one denies their existence. In the same way that the biblical writers literally believed in the ancient astronomy describing the

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assembly of the heavens, they also accepted the literal disassembly of these structures at the final judgment. The Message of Faith in these passages is not a revelation about the structure of the heavens. Instead, their purpose is to reveal that the world will come to an end and there will be a day of judgment when each of us will have to give an account for our life. And you can count on it happening.

The Lower Heavens and the Upper Heavens

Ancient Near Eastern peoples believed that the heavens were made up of two basic regions—the lower heavens and the upper heavens. The former includes the atmosphere, the firmament with its luminary bodies, and the sea of waters above. The latter is the celestial realm where God/s and other celestial beings reside. It is important to emphasize that according to these ancients, both regions are real *physical* locations, with the upper heavens resting upon the lower heavens. The Bible features this ancient astronomy.

The Hebrew word for heavens is *shāmayim*. It carries many meanings and the context of the passage in which it appears usually determines its interpretation. This term can refer to the dome of heaven as seen on the second day of creation when “God called the firmament ‘heavens’ ” (Gen 1:7). It can also mean air or atmosphere as found in the phrases “the birds of the heavens” (Gen 2:19–20) and “the clouds of heaven” (Dan 7:13). *Shāmayim* includes the waters above the firmament. As the psalmist writes, “God stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of His upper chambers on their waters” (Ps 104:2–3; cf., Ps 148:4). This verse also identifies the location of the Creator’s celestial dwelling place. It rests upon the heavenly sea. From an ancient perspective, the prayers of the Hebrews make sense. “Look down from heaven, Your holy dwelling place, and bless Your people Israel” (Deut 26:15; cf., Ps 33:13–14; Isa 40:22). Occasionally in the Old Testament, the upper heavens are called *shāmayim shāmayim* (literally, heavens of heavens) and are translated “highest heavens.” For example, “God made the heavens, the highest heavens with all their host, and the earth and all that is on it” (Neh 9:6; cf., 1 Kgs 8:27; Ps 148:4).

In the New Testament, the distinct heavenly structures of ancient astronomy are collapsed into one Greek word, making it difficult at times to understand and translate. *Ouranos* is rendered in English Bibles as heaven and sky. In the lower heavens, this term refers to the atmosphere or air as seen in the phrases “the birds of the heaven” (Matt 6:26; Luke

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9:58) and “the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62). *Ouranos* can also mean the firmament since it is opened (John 1:51; Acts 7:56), shaken (Matt 24:29; Heb 12:26), and rolled up (Heb 1:12; Rev 6:14). The waters above are implied since the sky can be shut from rainfall (Luke 4:25; Rev 11:6). Regarding the upper heavens, *ouranos* refers to where God and His angels dwell in many New Testament passages (Luke 22:43; Mark 12:25; John 6:38). For example, “As Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10–11).

To summarize, the Bible definitely presents a 3-tier universe as illustrated in Fig 3-2 on page 47. This view of the cosmos was the best science-of-the-day thousands of years ago in the ancient Near East, and it was accepted by the inspired writers of God’s Word and their readers.⁴ References in Scripture to the earth set on immovable foundations, the heavens being similar to a tent canopy, and the rising and setting sun are not fanciful poetic statements. These verses were intended to describe the literal structure and actual operation of the world. The use of common objects, like tents and building foundations, were analogies meant to convey the genuine arrangement of the heavens and the earth. However, it is clear that the biblical understanding of geology and astronomy does not correspond to physical reality. Scientific concordism fails.

Even though this is the case, it is necessary to emphasize that the incidental ancient geology and astronomy play an essential role in Scripture. They are vessels that deliver inerrant Messages of Faith, and they do so with proficiency. Evidence for this comes from Christians in every generation, because in reading Scripture, they have understood the foundational spiritual truth that the God of the Bible is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and earth. Of course, recognizing the ancient science in Scripture is at first challenging, especially for a modern generation like ours. And reading beyond this ancient phenomenological perspective of nature is quite counterintuitive. Yet with time and practice this is possible, and it is particularly important in the origins debate.

An implication regarding the ancient view of the world’s structure and operation in Scripture is that the Bible should also have an ancient understanding of origins. And since the geology and astronomy in the Word of God are ancient, consistency argues that there should be an ancient biology. Stated precisely, the biblical origins accounts might feature

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an ancient phenomenological perspective on the origin of life and death, including the beginning of human life and death. But before we look at these intriguing notions, a few well-known concordist interpretations can now be reconsidered.

Excursus: Scientific Concordism in Isaiah 40 and Job 26?

Two popular verses that Christians often use to “prove” that modern science appears in the Bible are Isa 40:22 and Job 26:7.⁵ The former is presented simply as, “God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth;” and the latter, “God spreads out the northern skies over empty space, and suspends the earth over nothing.” Read through a twenty-first century scientific mindset, Isa 40 could be seen as depicting the outline of planet earth from outer space, and Job 26 as referring to it being suspended by gravitational forces. If these are correct interpretations, then modern science was placed in Scripture well before scientists discovered these facts of nature. Scientific concordists argue that only a God who transcends time could have revealed such information ahead of time, and consequently, this is solid evidence that the Bible is divinely inspired.

However, these two examples are classic *biblical proof texts*. They are ripped out of context and then manipulated by reading into them (eisegesis) notions that were never intended by the human author or the Holy Spirit. As noted earlier, Isa 40:22 in its entirety reads, “God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.” Clearly, this verse reflects a 3-tiered universe. The cosmos is compared to a tent, with a domed canopy above and a flat floor below. This is an analogy that is used in Scripture to describe the structure of the world (Pss 19:4–5, 104:2–3). Moreover, the ancient science in Isa 40:22 is consistent with other passages in this biblical book. Isaiah asserts that at the judgment “the sky will be rolled up like a scroll” and “all the starry host will fall” to earth (34:4). He also claims that God is “the Creator of the ends of the earth” (40:28) and that He took Abraham “from the ends of the earth, from its remotest parts” (41:9). Thus, Isa 40:22 must be interpreted in its context and in light of ancient science. The circle of the earth refers to the circumferential shore of a flat circular earth (Fig 3-5; p. 53).

The scientific concordist interpretation of Job 26:7 also tears this verse out of the context of its chapter and book. Ancient astronomy is clearly seen a few verses later with “The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast

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at God's rebuke" (26:11). Belief that the heavens had foundations makes sense because the inspired author accepted the reality of the firmament, as seen in the question, "Can you join God in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?" (37:18). The location of the divine dwelling in the 3-tier universe is reflected in another question, "Who can understand how He thunders from His pavilion?" (36:29). In other words, the Lord lives just overhead in a place where the rumble of thunder arises. The book of Job also features ancient geology. "God unleashes His lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth" (37:3), "He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble" (9:6), and He asks, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" (38:4). In addition, the Hebrew word *tālāh*, which is translated as "suspends" in Job 26:7, appears in the context of hanging up an object, like a utensil on a peg (Isa 22:24), weapons on a wall (Ezek 27:10), or a lyre on a tree (Ps 137:2). Job 26:7 does not refer to hovering in empty space; it simply states that the earth is not hung from anything in the universe.

The scientific concordist interpretations of Isa 40:22 and Job 26:7 are proof texts. Regrettably, many Christians rip these verses out of Scripture and their ancient scientific context, and then conflate them with modern scientific ideas. The popular concordist understandings of the circle of the earth and the suspension of the earth over nothing are unbiblical.

INERRANCY, ACCOMMODATION, AND BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

Conservative Christian theology is distinguished by the belief in biblical inerrancy. Commonly understood, this notion asserts that God inspired Scripture, and as a result, it is completely free from any errors. Of course, a high view of biblical inspiration is foundational to the best theology. However, most Christians conflate the concept of biblical inerrancy with a strict literal interpretation of Scripture. They often assume that statements in the Bible about the structure, operation, and origin of the world are completely factual and in alignment with physical reality. In other words, a majority of Christians are scientific concordists, and they believe that inerrancy extends to scientific statements in Scripture.

But as Fig 3-6 reveals, scientific concordism fails. We do not live in a 3-tier universe. The earth is not flat, circular, and stationary. The sun, moon, and stars are not embedded in a firmament that holds up a sea of water overhead. The ancient view of nature in God's Word challenges the

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Structures	Reality
Flat circular earth with ends, foundations & underworld	No
Flat circumferential sea around earth & bordered by horizon	No
Firmament overhead in heaven & set on foundations	No
Sun, moon & stars set in firmament	No
Sea of waters above in heaven & held up by firmament	No
Beams of divine dwelling set in sea of waters above	No
Operations	
Earth stationary & immovable	No
Sun moves daily across sky & under horizon	No
Sun, moon & stars move through firmament	No
Stars occasionally fall to earth	No

Fig 3-6. The Failure of Scientific Concordism

common understanding of biblical inerrancy. Serious questions immediately arise the moment Christians recognize that statements about nature in the Bible do not correspond to physical reality: Why is there a conflict instead of an accord between Scripture and science? Did the Holy Spirit make a mistake in the revelatory process? Or asked more bluntly, does God lie in the Bible?

Principle of Biblical Accommodation

Let me answer the last question very directly: NO! God does NOT lie in the Bible. Lying requires deceptive and malicious intent, and the Lord is not a God of deception and maliciousness. In fact, Scripture itself states that God “does not lie” because “it is impossible for God to lie” (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). Instead, when the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible, He *accommodated*. He lowered Himself and met them and their readers at their level. In the same way that Jesus meets us wherever we happen to be, so too the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture by using their terms and concepts about the natural world in order to reveal as effectively as possible Messages of Faith. Some Christians might assume that accommodation waters down the Bible. Not true. Four basic arguments support the principle of biblical accommodation:

- Divine accommodation is a consequence of divine revelation. That is, built into the notion that God reveals to humans is the fact that

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the Infinite Creator has to descend to the level of finite creatures in order to communicate.

- The principle of accommodation is a critical aspect of the ultimate act of divine revelation—the Incarnation. According to Phil 2:7–8, God “humbled Himself” and “made Himself nothing” in order to become a man in the person of Jesus and to reveal His unfathomable love for us.
- Jesus accommodated in His teaching ministry. He often employed parables. These are earthly stories that deliver heavenly messages. At times, the Lord included ancient scientific notions, like the mustard seed being the smallest of all seeds, to communicate a divine revelation to His listeners.
- Finally, accommodation is experienced and even used by Christians today. In prayer, does the Lord not descend and speak to us through our intellectual categories? And when a four-year-old asks “the question” about where babies come from, parents answer by coming down to the level of the child. They communicate the central message—a baby is a gift from God when a mom and dad love each other—without presenting the incidental details of sex.

The principle of accommodation also shapes modern translations of the Bible. It is most prominent in Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, which attempts to present the Scripture’s “ideas in everyday language.”⁶ For example, he translates the mustard seed parable in Matt 13:31–32 as: “God’s kingdom is like a pine nut that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge pine tree, and eagles build nests in it.” Peterson definitely delivers the Message of Faith that Jesus intended, but substitutes the ancient botany regarding the mustard seed with that of a tree known to people in America today. In this translation the power of the inerrant Word of God transcends the incidental use of a pine nut.

Keeping all of this in mind, we can accommodate the biblical accounts of origins to our generation. For example, Gen 1:1–5 could be rewritten with modern scientific concepts:

¹During billions of years God created the heavens and the earth through evolution.

²Now the world did not exist before the creation of space, time, and matter.

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³And God said, “Let there be an explosion.” And there was an explosion.

⁴God saw it was good, and He separated the explosion from nothingness.

⁵God called the explosion “The Big Bang.” This was the first cosmological epoch.

Again, the eternal Messages of Faith are preserved—the foundational beliefs that God created the world and that the creation is good. This Divine Theology is delivered employing an incidental modern science that is familiar to many of us today. And should a better scientific theory than evolution be discovered in the future, the inerrant messages of Gen 1:1–5 will be easily re-accommodated to this new understanding of origins.

Toward an Incarnational Approach to Biblical Inerrancy

The greatest act of divine revelation is the Incarnation (Latin *in*: in; *carnis*: flesh). God taking on human flesh in the person of Jesus provides us with parallels to help appreciate biblical inerrancy and to understand how the Holy Spirit inspired the biblical writers in passages that refer to the physical world.⁷ Instructive similarities appear between Scripture and: (1) the dual nature of the Lord, (2) His entering the world at a certain point in history, and (3) His teaching style in proclaiming the Good News.

A central Christian belief is that the Lord is both fully divine and fully human. As a man, Jesus undoubtedly experienced the limits and problems of a physical body—the need for food and sleep, common aches and pains, etc. Consequently, God’s ultimate act of revelation came through a fallible and imperfect human vessel. Most Christians would also agree that whether the Lord was six feet tall or five foot two, His actual height was not essential to the gospel He proclaimed. In other words, Jesus’ specific human characteristics are incidental to the Good News. Inerrancy rests in the Messages of Faith the Lord preached, and not in the less-than-perfect earthly vessel through which He delivered them.

Similar to Jesus, the Bible itself features both divine and human characteristics. For example, the New Testament is written in Koine Greek (*koine*: common). This ancient language is an unrefined form of Greek that was spoken by the average person in the streets. Today it is a dead language, because no community uses it. Yet despite these characteristics, Koine Greek still transports divinely inspired Messages of Faith. In fact, our primary source of knowledge about Jesus comes through this un-

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dignified language. Some Christians might assume that the Holy Spirit employed the most sophisticated form of Greek at that time, but this is not the case. Therefore, it is possible for an imperfect vessel, like a dead ancient street language, to transport God's inerrant Word.

Christian faith asserts that Jesus both transcends time and has entered into human history. In other words, God accommodated by leaving eternity to enter into the creaturely boundaries of time. As a consequence, the Lord's life and ministry were adapted to an ancient Palestinian period. He worked a typical job as a carpenter, ate the foods of the day, and taught parables using the common ideas of the people. Is it not conceivable, then, that the Incarnation could have occurred at another point in history, revealing the identical inerrant message of salvation? For example, if Jesus came to America today, He might be in a computer-related occupation, probably consume Coke and Big Macs, and would employ modern science in some parables. In other words, the actual point in history when Jesus came into the world is ultimately incidental.

Like Jesus' temporality, the Bible both transcends time and is bound within history. Scripture offers timeless truth written during various ancient historical periods. The actual points in history when the Holy Spirit inspired the sacred writers are incidental to the inerrant Messages of Faith. That is, there is nothing inherently special about any specific point in the past. In the same way that the Lord's timeless nature rises above His historicity, the eternal truths in Scripture transcend the ancient historical conditions during which they were revealed. Evidence for this fact is seen in the lives of men and women forever changed by the Gospel in every generation. The Message of Faith is not only relevant for people in the past, but also for us today, and for those in the future.

Jesus taught the Word of God using the words of humans. In order to deliver the Gospel as effectively as possible, He accommodated to the intellectual level of the men and women around Him. Notably, the Lord often used parables. These are stories in which the events that are mentioned never actually happened. This is powerful evidence that divine revelation is not limited to only literal and historical statements. Jesus also employed an imperfect ancient science, like the size of the mustard seed, to teach about the kingdom of God. But instructing in this way does not undermine the inerrancy of the spiritual messages. Rather, this technique makes the Gospel more accessible to an ancient audience. Undoubtedly, had Jesus lived today He would teach employing the marvelous discover-

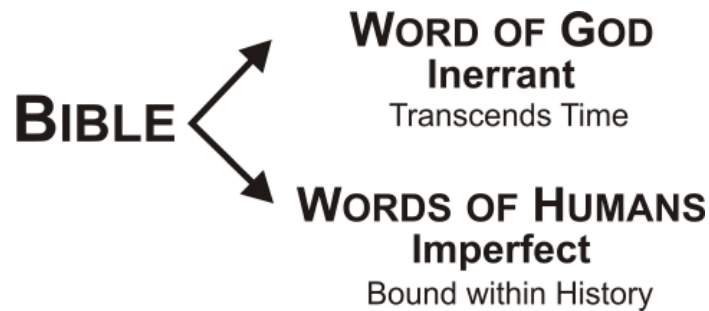


Fig 3-7. An Incarnational Approach to Biblical Inerrancy

ies of science. Thanks to the microscope, the mustard seed parable might be re-accommodated as: The kingdom of God is like a moss spore that falls to the ground; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when grown it is the widest of plants, extending across the forest floor, so that tiny creatures come and make their home in it.⁸

Similar to the teaching method employed by Jesus, the Bible is the Word of God delivered in the words of humans. The Lord's repeated use of parables opens the door to the possibility that the Holy Spirit revealed Messages of Faith in passages referring to events that never actually occurred in the past. Parts of Scripture, such as the accounts of origins in the book of Genesis, may feature non-literal and non-historical statements in order to facilitate the communication of Divine Theology. In addition, the presence of ancient science in Jesus' teachings indicates that an imperfect understanding of nature can deliver inerrant spiritual truths. His use of the science-of-the-day also offers a significant precedent: If evolution is true, then there is no reason why the biblical origins accounts could not be re-accommodated for our generation by using modern evolutionary science as an incidental vessel to transport the Messages of Faith in Gen 1–3. Chapter 6 will explore this intriguing possibility.

To conclude, Fig 3-7 depicts an approach to biblical inerrancy that reflects features of the Incarnation. The correspondence to the Message-Incident Principle is obvious. The Message of Faith is the inerrant and timeless Word of God, while incidental ancient science aligns with the imperfect and historically conditioned words of humans. The present chapter demonstrates that scientific concordism fails. Consequently, biblical inerrancy does not extend to statements about the structure and operation of the physical world. Yet, Scripture itself proves that an errant

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ancient science can reveal Holy Spirit-inspired eternal truths. In the illuminating light of Jesus, we can now see that *the Bible is the inerrant Word of God that transcends time, written in the imperfect words of humans bound within history.*⁹