

## Geocentricity?

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Does the Bible teach geocentricity? That is the idea that the earth is the stationary center of the universe, and the sun, planets, and all the stars revolve around the earth.

This is what Aristotle taught and the medieval church thought very highly of Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas, their greatest theologian, looked to Aristotle as an authority to whom he would often appeal. Since almost all the university professors agreed with Aristotle, some in the Church thought it wise to claim that Aristotle's theory was just the thing the Bible had been teaching all along. Other educated men in the church were open to the Copernican view. As I explained in my book, the "Galileo Affair" was not a simple matter of "religion" versus "science."

Suppose we consider three theoretical possibilities:

1. The earth is the stationary center of the universe, all else revolves around it.
2. The Sun is the stationary center of the solar system; the planets including earth revolve around it.
3. The Sun revolves around the Milky Way; the Earth revolves around the Sun and rotates on its axis. This would mean that both are in motion. Both the Sun and the Earth have their appointed course through the heavens; they cannot be moved off their courses.

I would maintain that no one could prove any one of these view from the words of Scripture alone, without any observations. Certainly we could learn from the Bible that the earth is the center of God's creative and redemptive work. Here He created life; here He became incarnate in the person of Christ; here Christ died for our sins. But those are not statements about astronomy, they were not written to tell us about the motion of stars, planets, or earth in our solar system or universe.

What the Bible does is to assume the only logical reference point: The Horizon. All motion is measured relative to two points, whether both, neither or only one of them is in motion. Whether theory 1, 2 or 3 is correct (or some other one) the movements of the heavens are in relationship to the horizon. With the horizon as our reference point, people have noted for centuries the position of the sun or stars in relation to the horizon. Let us say that view 3 is correct with both the sun and earth in motion. The horizon would be, as always, the point of reference. At sea men could navigate by the sun and stars. They could know something about the time and their location by observing the angle between various stars and the horizon (as with an astrolabe), as well as the compass bearing. **Genesis 1:14** <sup>14</sup> ¶ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;

Think of the word "Sunset" It speaks of the decreasing angle between the Sun and the horizon. Relative to the horizon the Sun is seen as descending. When it appears to be sitting on the horizon at 0° altitude it is "sunset." "Sunrise" is when the Sun appears on the horizon and is rising—its angle relative to the horizon is increasing.

Sunrise and sunset are not outdated terms, nor are they in error. Even the most extreme liberal alive [who keeps whining that the Bible is in error for using these terms] has not come up with better terms to describe the daily phenomena. When the “sun stood still” the usual descent of the sun toward the horizon was greatly [and probably gradually] slowed and paused before resuming its descent, so as to prolong the daylight and give Israel the victory. [**Joshua 10:13-14** So the **sun stood still** in the midst of heaven, and **did not hasten to go down** for about a whole day. <sup>14</sup> And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.]

No matter what theory of the solar system is true (even if it is likely the third) it remains true that the observation has to do with the relative position of the sun to the horizon from the vantage point of the observer.

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