
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer of Creation Education Materials on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and contributed to radio programs for the Institute for Creation Research.

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the Adobe Acrobat Reader, available for download on the internet, is the best way to view the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to Wayne at w.spencer@attbi.com.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the **creationanswers.net** web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings. I'd like to invite all of you reading this newsletter again to the DFW Creation Study Group. We have had some good meetings in the past two months, discussing the Genesis account of Noah's Flood. We meet at the Hurst Public Library from 2 to 4:30. The date of the meeting may vary from month to month in which Saturday it occurs. To find out when the next meeting is, you can always go to my web site to the Local Meetings link.

I have had some interesting challenges and opportunities recently. First of all, after submitting two technical papers to the International Conference on Creationism (August 2003), only one of them was accepted. The paper that was accepted is called "Tidal Dissipation and the Age of Io," which is about Jupiter's unique moon with active volcanos. The other paper, about the Chesapeake Bay impact crater, was coauthored with creationist author Michael Oard. This paper has been rejected for the ICC. Michael and I feel it was unfairly rejected. Thus, we plan to add some to the paper and resubmit it to the TJ journal from Answers in Genesis. I plan to present information regarding the Chesapeake Bay crater and how it relates to Noah's Flood at the Creation Study Group meeting, possibly in April or May.

Answers in Genesis recently asked me to write a creationist response to a new theory of planet formation. AIG intends to put it on their web site first, then possibly in Creation magazine later on. This new theory claims that planets could form in less than 1,000 years. It is mainly a response to discoveries of planets found outside our solar system. Currently the article is undergoing

peer review. You can get to the Answers in Genesis web site from Creationanswers.net. From there, you can search for my name on the AIG web site and you should find an article about the solar system and another technical article about the formation of extrasolar planets.

Recently on March 17th I was laid off from my job at Practitioners Publishing Company in Fort Worth. After seven years of working there this was a shock. I'm beginning to look for a job and I have severance pay for the time being. I hope that my new job will not interfere with future creation meetings. I am looking for a position in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. I appreciate your prayers.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

A Biblical Approach to Astronomy, Part 1

There are many fundamental questions about astronomy that need to be answered from a young age creation viewpoint. There is a need to bring the Bible to bear on some of these questions. But, in trying to answer scientific questions using Scripture there is great danger of making interpretational errors. A number of the conflicts between scientists and Bible scholars, or between creationists and evolutionists, have been caused by incorrect interpretation of the Bible. Thus it is important to clarify how much we can learn about astronomy from Scripture. The Biblical issues related to astronomy must be addressed before there can be definitive answers to some of the scientific questions.

In the days of Galileo this problem became an issue of great historical importance (especially around year 1633). The Catholic church had sanctioned the Ptolemaic view of the universe, which held that Earth was in the center of the universe

and the Sun and planets orbited around it. But, the Copernican view (later called heliocentrism, holding that Earth orbited the Sun) was new in Galileo's day. Galileo was Catholic and the Catholic church was not only a very powerful cultural force but it was also considered the seat of academic pursuits and it funded scientific research. Galileo was threatened with death at the stake by the Catholic Church unless he recanted his view that the Earth was moving around the Sun and that the Earth was not in the center of the universe. Galileo recanted and spent the rest of his life confined and alone under house arrest.

The whole Ptolemaic vs Copernican controversy came about because the Catholic church did not interpret Scripture correctly. There may have been some scholars at the time who would have said otherwise, but the view that the Sun moved rather than the Earth was apparently entrenched in Galileo's time in the thought of many Christians and Catholics. In addition, the intuitive ideas about motion that most people had were reinforced by the Ptolemaic model.

The old Ptolemaic system and variations of it are referred to as Geocentrism. Even today there continue to be some Christian groups who hold that the Earth does not orbit the Sun. The modern form of this concept is referred to as Geocentricity. Geocentricity is not the same model as the old Geocentrism. However, believers who hold to Geocentricity today continue to make interpretational errors that lead to their views. Geocentricity believers today are sincere Christians as far as I know. There are two organizations today that promote Geocentricity. One group believes the Earth rotates, the other believes it does not rotate. They hold very strongly to the inerrancy of the Bible, which I applaud them for. Occasionally creationist publications will address the question of Geocentricity. However, to date these creation articles have mainly attempted to address scientific problems with Geocentricity. To me, the important problem with Geocentricity and the

older Geocentrism is that they do not follow sound methods of Biblical interpretation.

Geocentricity believers also as far as I can tell always hold to a strict “King James only” view of the Bible. So they would reject other modern translations. Because they rely on the exact words and phrases in the King James for their view, they tend to come to a forced unnatural interpretation of certain details. Remember it is not any of our modern English translations which are inerrant, but it was the original autographs penned in the hand of the Biblical writers that were inerrant. This is one reason we should use more than one translation in our personal study.

The strict “King James only” view of the Bible does not reflect sound scholarship. Other more modern translations are not perfect either, but relying exclusively on only one translation while disregarding others tends to lead to mistakes in interpreting Scripture. The English language has changed significantly since the King James Bible was translated in year 1611. Also, many manuscripts of Biblical texts in their original languages have been found since 1611, including the Dead Sea Scrolls for example. These manuscripts allow scholars to have more confidence about what the Biblical text says. Furthermore, much has been learned since 1611 from archeological and linguistic scholarship that has bearing on Biblical translation. A number of the arguments Geocentricity believers use hinge on verses in the King James that are very likely not translated well. The King James Bible is still a good translation for many uses, if you understand some of its limitations as a translation and enjoy its language style. But most Christians who hold to a strict King James view have no idea of the interpretational difficulties it causes them. Enjoying the language style and sound of the King James does not make a person knowledgeable enough to adequately deal with the translational issues with it. This does not mean we should not use the King James at all, but for in-depth study other

translations and reference tools should be used.

Some verses used in support of Geocentrism and Geocentricity include for example Psalm 93:1, Ps. 104:5, Ps. 119:90, and Joshua 10:12-14. Geocentricity believers today reject the hermeneutical principle of phenomenological language (sometimes also referred to as “observational” or “anthropomorphic” language). This is the principle that events are described as they were seen and experienced by the people involved. Thus, when the long day of Joshua is described it is only telling how Joshua saw and experienced the miracle, not giving a scientific description of what actually took place. Geocentricity believers would argue that this would mean God would be revealing an untruth in His word, something that God knew was not really accurate.

I would think of it more in terms of God using the language skills and understanding of the individual He revealed His word to. There is nothing untrue about a description of what the long day of Joshua was like to experience, which is what we have in Joshua 10. God did not intend to describe the actual mechanical or scientific aspects of what took place. Scripture is not written from that perspective. We simply do not know exactly how God made the Sun “stand still” for Joshua’s battle. God did not tell us. But the fact that God did not tell us does not mean it was not historical, or that it is a figurative story. We should still praise God for the miracle of it.

Thus, there is no challenge to Biblical inerrancy in the heliocentric view of the solar system, in which the Earth orbits the Sun. There was therefore no reason at all for the Catholic church to be threatened or concerned when a scientist like Galileo argued for a Sun-centered view. The Bible does not address the question of whether the Earth orbits the Sun or vice versa. It is sad that at that time in history, the church did not have a better understanding of how to interpret the Bible. The heliocentric view eventually won out over the Ptolemaic view after many years of debate. You may be able

to say God used experimental science in the Copernican debate to correct the overly simplistic assumptions made by the Church about Earth's place in the universe.

The unfortunate result of the Copernican revolution was that the Bible began to be discounted in terms of its authority and historical reliability. As science prospered in the 1600's and 1700's the Bible was no longer taken to be authoritative, *in matters that pertained to science*. In time, science came to have more authority in western culture than the Bible. Thus there came to be a concept eventually in society that the Bible only speaks to personal, spiritual, and moral issues but not to objective truth such as in history and science. This is not how things should be because God's word speaks with equal authority in everything it addresses.

The Bible makes a number references to the stars and the universe. Often it teaches significant things about God from these passages. There are also some ways in which these passages confirm certain concepts in astronomy. It is important that we think Biblically as Christians, so that we can evaluate ideas we are exposed to from science and so that we can answer these ideas with our children or in speaking with others around us. Active leading Creationists still do not have a consensus on a number of basic questions about astronomy. Thus there is a need to apply Scripture to lay the foundation for further creation research.

The Bible affirms God's knowledge of the stars and His sovereignty over them. The Apostle Paul mentioned the stars in I Corinthians 15:41 for instance, saying that "star differs from star in splendor (NIV)." This implies that stars are not all alike. Today we know from astronomical research that there are great variations in the properties of stars.

Psalms 147:4 is also interesting regarding stars. The NIV Bible says "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." This is amazing.

Scientists do not have names for all the stars, they only name some of them and number the rest according to 2 or 3 different classification systems. But God has names for them all! In the NAS Bible it says "He counts the number of the stars." Note the use of present tense here. The Brenton English translation of the Septuagint (Greek) Old Testament says "He numbers the multitudes of stars." This Psalm as well as a similar verse in Isaiah 40:26 seem to indicate there is an ongoing counting of stars (by God) that has continued throughout history to the present. If this is correct, it implies the number of stars has not been constant since Creation. Today we know that stars have an end to their existence and most astronomers believe stars can form today under the proper conditions. Whether stars form today is a question creationists still debate. But the ideas that stars are not all alike, they change, and they have an end to their existence are very consistent with modern astronomy.

Stars can go through various stages, though if the universe is only 6 to 8 thousand years old there may not have been time for most of them to change much. The changes in a star that naturally take place as it uses up its "fuel" is called Stellar Evolution by astronomers. Note that this is a use of the word "evolution" that has nothing to do with origins, except for how it is limited by a young universe less than 10,000 years in age. So, Stellar Evolution might be better called Stellar Aging. There is nothing contrary to Stellar Evolution or Stellar Aging in the Bible. In Part 2 of this series, we will look at how Intelligent Design is evident in astronomy.

Evolution - Requirement for Graduate School?

Recently a biology professor at Texas Tech University (Michael Dini) came under investigation by the Department of Justice for religious discrimination. The issue was raised by a Christian student at Texas Tech.

Professor Dini has a web page (<http://www2.tlct.ttu.edu/dini/Personal/letters.htm>) which explains that before a student can receive a letter of recommendation to graduate school from Dr. Dini, they must answer a question about human origins by indicating that they believe evolution. Dr. Dini's web page states, "How do you account for the scientific origin of the human species? If you will not give a scientific answer to this question, then you should not seek my recommendation."

The Liberty Legal Institute (or LLI), from Plano, Texas has filed a complaint with the Department of Justice. The Liberty Legal Institute provides free legal counsel to individuals who are victims of religious discrimination. LLI was founded in 1997 by Attorney Kelly Shackelford, who has been known for years for representing Christians in various discrimination cases. LLI took the complaint to Texas Tech first but since nothing was done about the issue a complaint was filed with the Dept. of Justice. The Dept. of Justice is said to be currently waiting for a response from the University. The University seems to be supporting Professor Dini. Dr. Dini argues that a medical student (for example) not accepting biological evolution would make poor clinical decisions in medical practice.

I would agree with LLI that the above practice of Professor Dini is bigotry. Since Dini is a Professor in a state University, he is in essence a state official and LLI argues that it is illegal for state officials to require a student to deny their religious beliefs. To read about the issue on the LLI website, go to <http://www.libertylegal.org/inthenews.htm>.

Discrimination against creationists in the sciences is nothing new. Creationist teachers have lost their jobs or been reassigned to non-science courses. Students in high school and college courses who do not believe evolution are sometimes belittled and treated disrespectfully by instructors. The discrimination against creationists in the sciences is probably at its worst for graduate students or related to the

awarding of tenure for a university faculty position. Professor Dini's evolutionary criteria for writing a recommendation letter for graduate study is not unusual. Many professors would probably do the same thing but would not put it plainly in writing on a university web page for anyone to read. So it seems to me Dr. Dini is just doing more openly what many others would do quietly.

On the other hand, in most cases, a student preparing for graduate study or medical school could simply find another professor to provide the recommendation letter. The recommendation letter is only one relatively minor requirement for admission to a graduate program. Some graduate programs would not even require such a letter. Even if there is no such trouble for a given student in getting admitted to a graduate degree program, the student could later be denied their degree if they do not accept evolution. This occasionally happens, thus any Christian who is a graduate student in the sciences must be careful. Fortunately many Professors are not so unfair over a student's beliefs as Professor Dini appears to be. Christians should be concerned about these cases of discrimination and should support organizations such as LLI.

The True Story of Noah's Ark - Multimedia Presentation by Tom Dooley

Recently in the Dallas area two churches sponsored a special multimedia presentation by Tom Dooley. Tom Dooley produces a radio program called The Journey (on 91.7 FM in Dallas). This program was a major production, in which five computer projectors were synchronized to present a very large and wide image. (I would estimate the entire five screens may have been 50-60 feet wide.) Tom Dooley was present giving a dramatic rendering of the story of Noah's Ark from Genesis. There were also props of stuffed animals and a scale model of the Ark.

Some of the program was actual video and some very well done paintings.

This interested me very much, not only because it was about Noah's Flood, but also because some years ago (1992) I produced a multimedia program called "Wonders of the Solar System." In those days such things were done with multiple slide projectors and a special electronic device for programming a synchronized presentation and setting it to music. Apparently, this new program by Dooley is the first time anyone has tried to do something like this on multiple screens with computers and computer projectors. It really makes for an exciting program. I think it can make the story more real.

I would recommend that you go to "The True Story of Noah's Ark" if you have opportunity, though I do have some reservations about it. Most of it follows Genesis well, though there are some points where some dramatic license has been taken adding details Genesis does not address. An example would be a long segment showing the Devil and God arguing about Noah and discussing how the Devil controlled people all over the pre-flood world. While this may be possible, the Bible certainly doesn't mention it. There are other details in the program that similarly are not actually discussed in Genesis and thus may or may not be true.

There are a few points that do not follow what I would consider the best creationist research. One of the more noticeable such points is about a certain concept of what Earth's atmosphere was like before the Flood. The program describes the sky as somewhat pink before the Flood and blue after the Flood. I would say this is not possible. A consequence of this view is that the program indicates Noah did not ever see stars at night until after the rains stopped and the clouds cleared during the Flood. This would mean Adam and Eve could not see stars at night. These ideas are not reasonable because the stars were created

to give light on the Earth from the beginning, and to help mark seasons and the passage of time. So I would not agree with this aspect of the program, but I don't think this detracts a great deal from the program in general.

The artwork is really excellent in the program and Tom Dooley generally did a very good performance. Tickets were \$15 or \$20. I don't know what ticket prices were for children. It is a great program for children. If I were a Christian parent I would want to explain to kids the parts that are not mentioned in the Bible and I would point out that Adam, Eve, and Noah could see stars before the Flood. I would like to have heard some statement to the effect that some details in the program are not mentioned in the Bible but are a particular interpretation of how it may have taken place. We do not know all the details about what happened in Noah's life, or in how the Flood took place.