

The Flat-Earth Belief of Bible Writers
by Adrian Swindler
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All Christian sects recognize the Bible as the primary source of revelation. This compiled material was allegedly inspired by God and written by chosen authors to reveal him and his will to man. The Bible, then, is the foundation of the Christian religion. To Christian fundamentalists who believe in verbal inspiration, the Bible is an infallible foundation. They claim that "the Holy Spirit so dominated and guided the minds and pens of those who wrote (the Bible) as to make their writings free from mistakes of any and all kinds, whether it be mistakes of history or chronology or botany or biology or astronomy, or mistakes as to moral and spiritual truth pertaining to God or man, in time or eternity," (Wilbur F. Tillett, "The Divine Elements in the Bible," The Abingdon Bible Commentary).

Despite the obvious sincerity of those who so view the Bible, the inerrancy doctrine has no basis in fact. That the Bible contains mistakes in every area mentioned by Mr. Till is a truth widely recognized by reputable Bible scholars. One of the most consistent scientific errors that Bible writers made concerned their misconception of the earth's shape. In Psalm 24:2, for example, it was said that "the world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his. He built it on the deep waters beneath the earth and laid its foundations in the ocean depths," (GNB).

This passage and others like it in the Bible make no sense until they are interpreted in terms of the ancient Hebrew conception of the world as represented in the graphic illustrations on the following page that were published in the New American Bible and The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. (Similar ones appear in other Bible dictionaries.) If you will study the graphics and then read the above quotation again, the psalmist's meaning will become quite clear. He thought the earth rested on foundations or pillars that God had set in the ocean depths. Needless to say, modern science knows better.

Here are just a few of the many other passages that prove Bible writers were ignorant of Earth's spherical shape:

Daniel 4:7-8, "I saw a tree of great height, at the center of the world. It was large and strong, with its top touching the heavens, and it could be seen from the ends of the earth." This was allegedly an inspired dream, yet it conveys a flat-earth concept, because no matter how tall a tree would be, people on the other side of a spherical earth could not see it.

Matthew 4:8, "The devil took him (Jesus) to a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence...." The only plausible reason for the "very high mountain" was that the altitude would make it possible to see to the ends of the earth. Only on a flat earth would this be remotely possible, so the New Testament writers were as ignorant as the Old.

In Genesis 11:4, the people wanted to build a tower up to heaven. If you look at the graphics above, you can see their concept of heavenly bodies under the dome, not all that far away. Presumably, the Lord was afraid they would be able to accomplish their plan, so he caused them to speak various languages. This, of course, is not the reason people speak different languages, but nothing is too fantastic for the ignorant to believe.

The following references show that Bible writers thought there was water above a solid dome with floodgates (look at the graphics again) that could be opened to make it rain:

Job 38:22, "Have you entered the storehouse of the snow, and seen the treasury of the hail?" Look at items two and three in the graphic from the Interpreter's Dictionary, and the intended meaning of this statement becomes very clear.

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Psalms 104:3, 13, "You stretch the heavens out like a tent, you build your palace on the waters above.... You water the mountains from your palace." Here God dwells in a palace above the waters over the firmament or dome. To water the mountains, he opens the floodgates. Quite unscientific!

Genesis 1:6-7, "Let there be a dome to divide the water and to keep it in two separate places... and it was done. So God made a dome, and it separated the water under it from the water above it." So the NAB and The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible are quite correct in their graphic representations of what the Bible writers believed and taught. How many of you readers believe the earth is flat? The Bible teaches it is!

Christian fundamentalists have used various scriptures to try to prove that Bible writers knew the earth was round. Since I have already shown that these writers thought the earth is flat, if some verses actually do teach that it is round, then there is a contradiction in the Bible and the fundamentalists lose anyway.

Job 38:13-14 is sometimes quoted as a round-earth text: "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment." Claim is made that the statement about the earth "turn(ing) as clay to the seal" was a reference to the earth's rotation, but this passage has nothing to do with movement. The word used was haphak, which meant "to convert, to change, or to make clear." It is the same word that was used in Exodus 7 in reference to Aaron's rod turning into a serpent and the waters of Egypt turning to blood, so rather than the word meaning turning in the sense of movement, it meant turning in the sense of changing. The GNB clarifies the meaning in Job 38:14: "Daylight makes the hills and valleys stand out like the folds of a garment, clear as the imprint of a seal on clay." So, far from teaching the revolution of the earth, this was merely a reference to the effects of sunlight in the morning. Notice also that the KJV refers here to "the ends of earth." This would indicate a flat earth, since there are no ends to a globe.

Job 26:7 has also been cited as proof that the writer of this book knew that the earth was a sphere: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place and hangeth the earth upon nothing." An NAB footnote at this verse says, "The North: used here as a synonym for the firmament, cf. Is. 14:13," (emphasis inserted). Thus, we read, "He stretches out the dome (firmament) over the empty space." In other words, the dome was unsupported in the middle. The reference in Isaiah 14:13 says, "You (King of Babylon) were determined to climb up to heaven and place your throne above the highest stars (see the graphics). You thought you would sit like a king on that mountain in the north where the gods assemble." The "north" was indeed used as a synonym for the heavens or firmament, so the passage was actually speaking of a "mountain in the heavens where the gods assemble."

"He... hangeth the earth upon nothing" simply expressed a Hebrew belief that the flat earth, although supported by pillars, did not rest on the back of Atlas or a turtle or an elephant, as their pagan neighbors believed. In this Job was right but not because he was inspired; otherwise, he wouldn't have said in the same context, "The pillars of the heavens tremble (see the graphics) and are stunned at his thunderous rebuke," (26:11). He thought the thunder was God's voice!

Fundamentalists use Isaiah 40:22 to argue that Earth's rotundity was known to the writer: "It is he (God) that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." They misunderstand the first half of the verse, which is clarified by the placement of "God's throne" in the NAB graphic, and they avoid the second half. The NAB gives us a proper translation of the verse: "He sits enthroned above the vault (dome) of the earth.... He stretches out the heavens like a veil, spreads them out like a tent to dwell in." See the graphic illustrations again and check the Hebrew concept of firmament as explained in Eerdmans and other reliable Bible dictionaries.

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The Hebrews were inspired by nothing more than their political and religious motivations. Thus, being ignorant of scientific facts, they thought the earth was flat, that sick people were possessed by demons, and that essentially everything was caused by either gods or demons. Unfortunately, many people are still just as ignorant.