

## Look Who's Talking

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As we strive to study and defend the Bible, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with an **inspired** record that contains numerous **uninspired** statements. Even though “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), not everything that the inspired writers recorded was a true statement. For example, after God created Adam, He told him not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil lest he die (Genesis 2:17). Yet, when the serpent approached Eve, he “informed” her that she would **not** die if she ate of this forbidden fruit (3:4). Obviously, Satan was not inspired by God to say, “You will not surely die.” In fact, as we learn later, he actually lied (John 8:44). However, when Moses—hundreds of years later—recorded the events that took place in Eden, he wrote by inspiration of God (cf. Luke 24:44; John 5:46). When Christ healed a demoniac, some of the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons, not by the power of God, but by the power of “Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 12:24). Like Moses, Matthew did not **write** a lie, but merely **reported** a lie. The inspired writers of the Bible are in no way responsible for inaccurate statements that are recorded therein. Whether the statements were true or false, they reported them accurately.

Whether offering a defense for a particular biblical truth (cf. 1 Peter 3:15), or refuting the error that someone else is teaching (cf. Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2), we must keep in mind **who** is doing the talking. The above examples are rather elementary: Satan’s statement and the Pharisees’ allegations clearly were false. But what about when statements are made by individuals who do not seem “as bad” as these?

Oftentimes, while attempting to defend a certain doctrine, a person will quote a verse from the book of Job and say, “See, that’s what it says; the book of Job states it. Therefore my doctrine is proven true.” Not long ago, I read an article by a gentleman who defended a doctrine by citing various verses in the book of Job. This man never indicated **who** made the statements; he simply cited all of them as being truthful comments. Those who “defend the truth” in such a way totally disregard one of the fundamental rules of interpretation—**knowing who is speaking**. One who studies Job must realize that it is an **inspired** book that contains many **uninspired** statements. For instance, we know that Job’s wife was incorrect when she told him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). We also know that many statements made by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were incorrect. Nine of the 42 chapters in the book were speeches by these “miserable comforters” (16:2) whom God said had “not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has” (42:7). Clearly then, one never should quote these men and claim it as an inspired truth.

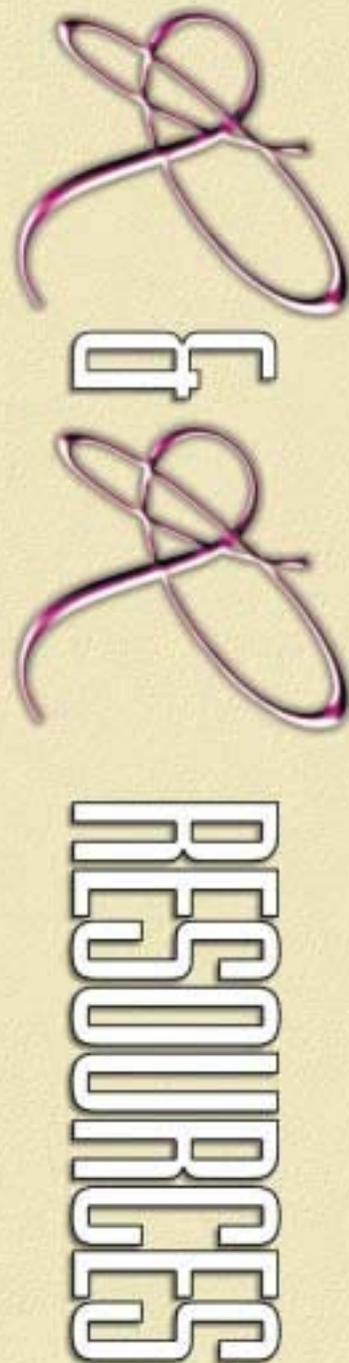
Finally, we must understand that even though Job was “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (1:1), there is no indication that his speeches were inspired. Neither He nor anyone else in the book ever claimed his statements were offered “by inspiration of God.” In fact, when Jehovah finally responded to Job out of the whirlwind, He asked: “Who is this who darkens counsel by **words without knowledge**?” (38:2, emp. added). Obviously, God never would have asked such a rhetorical question had Job been inspired. Prior to the Lord’s speeches, Elihu twice accused Job of the very same thing (34:35; 35:16). Later, Job himself even said: “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, **which I did not know**” (42:3, emp. added; cf. 30:16-23). Clearly, Job’s speeches were not inspired.

Through the millennia, various authors have sought to establish scientific foreknowledge in the passage found in 26:7 where Job, in speaking of God, observed that “He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.” Two items from this passage are alleged to be prescientific in nature. First, appeals have been made to the fact that one supposedly can observe an “empty space” in the northern skies—a space where there are no stars, thus corroborating Job’s statement about an “empty space” in the north. Second, some have suggested that since Job’s phrase, “He hangs the earth on nothing,” is literally true (because as everyone now knows, the Earth is freely suspended in space), this is an example of scientific foreknowledge. But if we attempt to convince people that this verse is to be taken literally, how do we then consistently deal with statements in the same chapter that obviously are figurative (such as verse 11—“The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his rebuke”)? Further, there is no empty space in the north. Instead, “billions of stars and galaxies extend outward in all directions” (DeYoung, 1989, p. 95). [Job was not speaking of a **literal** “empty space” in the north. During his day, pagan gods of idolaters were said to live “in the north.” Job pointed out, correctly, that this could not be true because in the north there was nothing but “an empty space.”]

The sincere Christian desires to defend the Word of God with every legitimate weapon in the apologetic arsenal. However, we only hurt the cause of Christ when we employ arguments that are backed by uninspired statements. Whenever we are studying the Bible or teaching and defending its many truths, we always should remember to **look who’s talking**.

### REFERENCES

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RESOURCES

**Q** What is the “doctrine of apparent age”?

**A** How old is the Earth? No one knows the exact number of times this globe has orbited the Sun. However, using biblical chronology, a person can calculate the age of the Earth to be in the neighborhood of 6,000 years old.

“But the Earth looks millions of years old,” some people have protested. There are at least two responses to such a statement. First, one might ask: “**Compared to what**; what does a young Earth look like?” We obviously do not have another Earth that we know is younger than this one, so how would we know what a young Earth looks like. Second, it should not surprise us if science occasionally calculates older dates for the Earth, due to a concept known as the “doctrine of apparent age.”

This idea suggests that the things God made during the Creation week were formed complete and fully functional. For instance, how old were Adam and Eve two seconds after God created them? They were literally two seconds old! Yet they walked, talked, and looked like adult human beings, and even had the ability to reproduce (Genesis 1:28). If a tree were cut down in

the Garden of Eden one day after the Creation week, how many rings would it have had? Possibly hundreds, yet it would have been only five days old (trees and other plants, remember, were created on day three of the Creation week). So, the **real** age of the tree and the **apparent** age of the tree would have been quite different. Just because this Earth may **appear** older than 6,000 years, does not mean it **is** older than that.

Some have opined that if God made the Earth appear older than it actually is, then He has deceived us because things aren’t really as old as they look. This criticism would be true—except for one thing: **God told us what He did!** He did not leave us in the dark or try to “trick us” or “test our faith” by hiding from us important information that He knew we would need. Rather, He was very straightforward and honest with us. Considering the material found in the first eleven chapters of Genesis (and elsewhere throughout the Bible), no one can justifiably accuse God of deception. If we ignore His Word regarding what He said He did, is it God’s fault? Hardly!

**Kyle Butt**

IN THE NEWS

“Is Physics Watching Over Us?” This is the title of an article that appeared on *Nature*’s August 13, 2002 On-line Science-Update (<http://www.nature.com/nsu/020812/020812-2.html>). In this review, Philip Ball admitted: “Our Universe is so unlikely that we must be missing something.” Mr. Ball is exactly right! For decades now, cosmologists have been attempting to conjure up theories regarding the origin of our Universe—all the while wearing “evolutionary blinders.” It appears as though some cosmologists finally are removing those blinders, and actually are beginning to come to terms with their own data.

As a part of his review, Mr. Ball commented on an upcoming research paper titled “Disturbing Implications of a Cosmological Constant.” In referring to the work being carried out by a team of researchers headed by Leonard Susskind of Stanford University, Mr. Ball wrote: “...[P]hysicists have claimed that the prevailing theoretical view of the Universe is logically flawed. Arranging the cosmos as we think it is arranged, say the team, would have **required a miracle**” (emp. added). Ball then observed that the apparent incomprehensibility of our situation even has driven Susskind’s team to ponder whether “an **unknown agent** intervened in the evolution [of the Universe] for reasons of its own” (emp. added).

To this, we add the recent findings that have been making headlines in newspapers around the world concerning a recent *Nature* article. A team of scientists (including world-famous physicist Paul Davies) reports that “light has been slowing down since the creation of the universe.” While at first glance this simple observation may seem trivial, if it holds true, then it may provide answers that point specifically to a biblical creation. In analyzing such concepts as the distances of galaxies or the time required for starlight to reach the Earth, scientists always have **assumed** that the speed of light was constant. If it is not, this (pardon the pun) sheds “new light” on the starlight travel-time problem. Current evidence clearly points to a “miracle” from an “unknown agent.” Stay tuned.

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