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4 pillars of the earth bible

by Don Batten, Ph.D.Skeptics/deists/atheists often throw up the Earth being set on pillars in 1 Sam 2:8, as supposedly proving that the Bible writers taught an unscientific theory. Here is a brief response to this nonsense: John Gill's commentary (On-Line Bible/The Word), originally published 1766: 'for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them;' The earth has its foundations on which it is laid, and its pillars by which it is supported; but these are no other than the power and providence of God; otherwise the earth is hung upon nothing, in the open circumambient air: and that God can and does do this may well be thought, and to do all the above things in providence and grace, related in the preceding verses; in the support, and for the proof of which, this is observed. Figuratively, the pillars of the earth may design the princes of the world, the supreme rulers of it, and civil magistrates, who are sometimes called cornerstones, and the shields of the earth (Zech. 10:4, Ps 47:9) and so pillars, because they are the means of cementing, supporting, and protecting the people of the earth, and of preserving their peace and property. Likewise good men may be meant in a figurative sense, who, as they are the salt of the earth, are the pillars of it, for whose sake it was made, and is supported, and continued in being; the church is the pillar and ground of truth; and every good man is a pillar in the house of God, and especially ministers of the Gospel (see Rev. 3:12, 1Tim. 3:15, Gal 2:9, Pr 9:1). It is clear that, in context, the reference is to the noble ones, princes, not the physical Earth. Immediately before, the context is people, and immediately after the context is also about people. It is quite clear that this is the meaning, as Gill points out (Ryrie's Study Bible notes also say the same thing). Compare Job 26:7 'He suspends the Earth over nothing'. This is in the context of descriptions of the physical creation and it is difficult to see how this statement could have a figurative meaning of any kind. See also Does the Bible really teach a flat Earth? Related ArticlesIsaiah 40:22 and the shape of the earth Yesterday, a facebook acquaintance asked me for help understanding a common misconception about the Bible. He said that one of his friends wanted to know how anyone could believe the Bible when it contains such outrageous claims like the claim that the earth is resting on pillars instead of being a globe suspended in space. Here is the answer that I gave:The Bible does not say that the earth rests on pillars. There are only three verses which speak of the pillars of the earth, and all three are using figurative language to refer to leaders among men. This is the same figure of speech that Paul used in Galatians 2:9 where he spoke of Peter, James and John being pillars in the church. The first verse that mentions the pillars of the earth is 1 Samuel 2:8."He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them." The first part of this verse tells us that it is God who lifts people into positions of leadership. This is a familiar theme that is repeated all throughout Scripture. The second part of the verse explains why it is God who makes this determination. God determines who will be in leadership because the positions of leadership all belong to Him. He is the One who created those roles, and He is the One who determines who will fill those roles. The positions of leadership in the earth, the pillars of the earth, are the Lord's. The second reference to the pillars of the earth is a little more difficult to understand. It is found in Job 9:6, but let's add verses 4 and 5 to our consideration as well."He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger: Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble." To understand the reference to the pillars of the earth in verse 6, we have to first ask who verse 5 is speaking of when it says "they know not." Obviously, this verse is not talking about the mountains because mountains cannot know anything in the first place. This verse can only be speaking of the people mentioned in verse 4 who had hardened themselves against God. These people will never prosper. God moves entire mountains, and these people know not what to do. God shakes the earth and the leaders thereof tremble in fear. The book of Job is a revelation of the character of God in opposition to the mischaracterizations that Job's friends had of God, and Job understanding the pillars of 9:6 to be leaders fits perfectly with the purpose of the book. The final reference to the pillars of the earth is found in Psalm 75:3, but let's include verses 2 and 4 to get the sense of the context."When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:" This passage is obviously referring to a judgement of people. The judge here promises to judge uprightly, and he says that before his judgement all the inhabitants of the earth will be dissolved. He will tell the fools to stop being foolish, and he will tell the wicked to stop bragging about themselves. And in the middle of this passage we see that the judge can do this because he is the one who bears up the pillars of the earth. This should cause us to think back to 1 Samuel 2:8 where we noticed that God is the One who both creates and fills the roles of leadership in the earth. Here in Psalm 75, we find that He is also the One who holds those leaders in their position, and when He decides to remove them from leadership, their societies are dissolved away. There is nothing that anyone can do to prevent His judgement. These are the only three verses that mention the pillars of the earth, and when we take the time to understand them, we can see that all three are using the term "pillars" as a figure of speech for human leaders. Resources Encyclopedia of The Bible E Pillars of the Earth EARTH, PILLARS OF THE (אֲרָמָה, pillars, columns). A poetic expression occurring only twice. Job 9:6 speaks of the trembling of the earth's pillars during an earthquake. In Psalm 75:3, there is also an "adjustment" of the pillars at the dissolving of the earth. Heaven's pillars "tremble" at the rebuke of God (Job 26:11). Some scholars insist that these references must mean that the Hebrews conceived of a world supported by literal pillars. A more general sense of "rocky foundations" is more probable. They, also, are said to tremble (Isa 24:18). Erik Lutz, AIG-US, explains why the Bible records both a statement that the earth is immovably set on pillars and that it is hanging on nothing. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them. (1 Samuel 2:8) He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing. (Job 26:7) At first glance, these verses appear to contradict each other: how can the earth rest on pillars and at the same time hang on nothing? In addition, the idea of earth having "pillars" and "foundations" seems to defy observations made by astronauts who have seen our planet from afar. To some, it may even sound vaguely like certain pagan beliefs, such as the Hindu idea that the earth is supported on the backs of four elephants that stand on the shell of a gigantic tortoise. But we should not view these biblical statements as myths, because God's Word is truth (John 17:17). The Solution The supposed contradiction quickly disappears when we examine the context of each passage and recognize it as figurative language. First Samuel 2:8 was spoken during a prayer by Hannah after she dedicated her son Samuel into the Lord's service. Job spoke the other verse while talking with his friends about man's weakness in light of God's majestic power. This sort of poetic imagery (pillars, foundations, etc.) is commonly used in Scripture to describe how God upholds the world. For example, consider what the Lord said to Job: Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone? (Job 38:4-6) We know that the earth does not literally have foundations and a cornerstone like a building; instead, God uses this figurative language to create a mental picture for Job. In the same way, animals do not talk and laugh, yet God also tells Job that the horse "laughs at fear" and "when the trumpet sounds, he says 'Aha!'" (Job 39:22, 25, ESV). This is something we are all familiar with in everyday speech. For example, if someone is not particularly sane, we might say he's "got bats in the belfry," "losing his marbles," "coming unglued," or "vacant upstairs." All of these are obviously not literal statements but rather figures of speech that give a more interesting look at the concept being expressed. Critics of our ministry often ridicule Answers in Genesis because we endorse the historical-grammatical hermeneutic. They claim that we must take everything in the Bible in a wooden literal sense. However, the historical-grammatical hermeneutic recognizes figures of speech are used in everyday language, and we should interpret them as such. When we interpret Scripture, we strive to find the author's intended meaning. Just as we use figurative language today, so also the writers of Scripture often used figures of speech, especially in passages written using poetic language like the examples above. So, God hangs the earth on nothing, but it's not just dangling in space. He has firmly fixed an orbit for our planet and upholds it securely in its proper place in our solar system.

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