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Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was a famous Italian scientist often called the "father of modern science". He changed how we see the universe by proving that the Earth and other planets revolve around the Sun.

Major Space Discoveries

While Galileo did not invent the telescope, he made it much more powerful. Using his improved telescope, he discovered:

The Moon's Surface: He saw that the Moon was not smooth but covered in mountains and craters.

Jupiter's Moons: He was the first to see the four largest moons of Jupiter: Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto.

The Phases of Venus: He observed that Venus goes through phases like the Moon, proving it orbits the Sun.

Sunspots: He found dark spots on the Sun, showing that it wasn't a perfect, unchanging object.

Famous Science Experiments

Galileo was a "natural philosopher" who believed in testing ideas through experiments.

The Law of Falling Bodies: Legend says he dropped balls of different weights from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to prove they hit the ground at the same time.

The Law of the Pendulum: While watching a swinging lamp in a cathedral, he realized that a pendulum takes the same amount of time for each swing, no matter how wide the swing is.

Early Inventions: He invented an early version of the thermometer and a special "military compass" for measuring distances.

Trouble with the Church

Galileo's discovery that the Earth moves around the Sun went against the beliefs of the Catholic Church at the time.

Because he wouldn't stop teaching this idea, he was put on trial in 1633 and spent the rest of his life under house arrest.

Hundreds of years later, in 1992, the Church officially apologized for its treatment of him.



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In the 1600s, Galileo Galilei used a telescope he improved himself to prove that the Earth moves around the Sun. This idea was called heliocentrism, and while we know it is true today, it got Galileo into major trouble with the Catholic Church at the time.

Why the Church Had a Problem

The "Center of the Universe": At that time, the Church and most people believed in geocentrism—the idea that the Earth was the unmoving center of the universe and everything else circled it.

Bible Interpretation: Church leaders believed that several passages in the Bible stated the Earth was fixed in place and the Sun moved. They felt Galileo's discovery was "heresy" because it seemed to say the Bible was wrong.

Personal Conflict: Galileo was a friend of Pope Urban VIII, but he wrote a book in 1632 that made anyone who believed the Earth was the center of the universe look foolish. This angered the Pope and other leaders.

What Happened to Galileo

The Trial: In 1633, the Church's legal body, the Inquisition, put Galileo on trial in Rome.

Forced to Recant: To save his life and avoid even harsher punishment, Galileo was forced to "recant" (say he was wrong and take back his theories) in front of the court.

House Arrest: He was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life. While he couldn't leave his home, he spent his final years continuing his scientific work.

Correcting the Mistake

It took over 300 years, but in 1992, the Catholic Church officially admitted they were wrong and that Galileo was right. Today, Galileo is celebrated as the "father of modern science" for choosing to believe what he could see and prove through his telescope.



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In 1633, the Catholic Church used several Bible passages to argue that the Earth stays still while the Sun moves around it. The most common verses used against Galileo's discoveries were:

Verses About the Sun Moving

Joshua 10:12–13: This story describes a battle where Joshua commands the Sun and Moon to stop in the sky so his army can finish the fight. The Church argued that if the Sun could be told to "stand still," it must normally be the thing that is moving.

Ecclesiastes 1:5: This verse states, "The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises". Church leaders took this as a literal description of the Sun's daily journey around a stationary Earth.

Psalm 19:4–6

: This passage describes the Sun as being like a runner "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race" from one end of the heavens to the other.

Verses About the Earth Staying Still

Psalm 93:1, Psalm 96:10, and 1 Chronicles 16:30: These similar verses all state that "the world is firmly established; it cannot be moved". The Church used these to claim the Earth was fixed in one place at the center of the universe.

Psalm 104:5: This verse says God "set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved".

Isaiah 40:22: This verse refers to God sitting above "the circle of the earth," which some at the time interpreted as the Earth being a flat, unmoving disk at the center of everything.

Galileo's Defense

Galileo was a religious man and did not think the Bible was wrong. He famously argued that "The Bible teaches how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go". He believed these verses used "everyday language"—like how we still say "the sun rises" today—rather than describing scientific facts



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Does the Bible prove science?

Is the Bible an accurate source for understanding life?

What did the Catholic church do to Galileo?

