

(Geocentric – Solar system rotates around the Earth)

(Heliocentric – Solar system rotates around the Sun)



Ancient Sumerian: We Ancient Sumerians knew a lot about planets but we weren't sure about how they moved. We thought they were all linked together somehow.



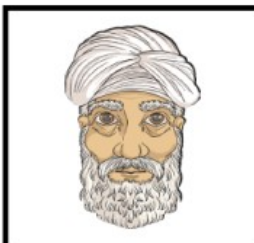
Aristotle: I'm Aristotle. I believe that the Earth is the centre of the Universe and that all planets move around it. I think quite rightly that the Earth is a sphere and it has transparent spheres surrounding it. The planets are attached to those spheres and move along them.



Ptolemy: I'm Ptolemy. Well I agree with Aristotle about some ideas. I also think that the Earth is in the centre of the Universe. It has to be because half the stars are above us and half are below us. So if we weren't in the centre of the Universe then we would not see all of the stars. Now in my model (called the Ptolemaic Model after me!) it shows that the other planets and the Sun move around the Earth in circles but also move in a circle on the circle as well. I know that's a bit complicated but you see it explains why the planets seem closer sometimes and further away at other times. Simple – great I managed to clear all that up!



Alhazen: I'm Alhazen. Well I do think that the Earth is at the centre – don't get me wrong but the planets simply can't move the way Ptolemy says. It doesn't make sense mathematically.



al-Katibi: I'm al-Katibi. I thought the Sun was the centre of the universe but I didn't really have the evidence so I went back to the geocentric model.



Tusi: I'm Tusi. I studied the planets a lot! I created the 'Tusi couple' which shows how planets can rotate and orbit at the same time. I wasn't entirely convinced that the Earth did though.



Copernicus: I'm Copernicus. I just didn't think Ptolemy's ideas about how the planets moved made sense!! It seemed that sometimes the planets looked like they were going backwards. I realised that it only made sense if the Earth was orbiting the Sun and so were the other planets. If the Earth was moving faster than the planet on its orbit then it makes sense that it might look like it's going backwards to us here on Earth.

Basically I used the 'Tusi Couple' idea to help me form a new idea about how the planets move. I think:

The Sun is not the centre of the universe but that it orbits around a point that is.

The moon orbits the Earth but the Earth orbits the Sun like all the other planets.

The Sun looks like its moving to us but actually it is the Earth that is rotating that makes this appear true.



Tycho Brahe: I'm Tycho Brahe. I didn't like the idea that the Earth moved around the Sun – so I invented a model where some planets do go round the Sun except for Earth. The Sun and Moon go round the Earth in my model.



Galileo: I'm Galileo Galilei Well I have to say that telescope is brilliant!! But the fact that I used it to look at space (the heavens as we call it) and my observations brought me into dispute with the Church in Italy. Here's the thing – until I started to observe planets with my telescope they were only used on land. I spent a long time observing Jupiter and its moons. I found that the moons were definitely orbiting Jupiter and not the Earth – therefore it made sense to me that Copernicus was right.

I did not disagree with the Church but thought that the bible was not talking about the actual movement of the Earth.

Unfortunately, when the Church found out they put me on trial, found me guilty of using a telescope to observe the universe (they had only been used on land until then) and saying the bible was not true. They made me recant my ideas (this involved me having to say that what I had found was not true). It wasn't hundreds of years after my death that the Church admitted it was wrong and that I should not have been found guilty. I had to live under house arrest for the rest of my life.



Kepler: I am Johannes Kepler. I was the first person to create an actual model and try to explain how the heliocentric system worked. More importantly I stated that the Sun was definitely the centre around which the planets orbited. I came up with the laws of how the planets moved.



Newton: I'm Isaac Newton. It was obvious by the time I was writing my works that the only idea that made sense was that the solar system was heliocentric. I supported Kepler's work with my own ideas of gravity which help explain why the planets stay in their orbits as they do.