



YEAR-END VIEWPOINTS

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MISCELLANEOUS CHRISTMAS MISCONCEPTIONS

ISRAEL

RISING THREAT

A new and serious threat to the peace and security of Israel is quickly gaining momentum. That threat is the prospect that the Palestinian leadership will unilaterally declare their own independent, sovereign state as early as the summer of 2011, attempt to divide Jerusalem, and that the world will try to force Israel to accept this new state rather than require the Palestinians to sit down and negotiate a fair and just arrangement that is acceptable to both sides. Interestingly, President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton favor a Palestinian state. Additionally, numerous World leaders favor a Palestinian state and are putting enormous pressure on Israeli leaders to cut a swift deal with the Palestinians or face the prospect of a Palestinian state being imposed upon them. To date, Brazil, Argentina, Boliva, Uruguay and Turkey are moving to formally recognize a Palestinian state. Additional countries are preparing to do so soon. Bible prophecy clearly states that the nations of the world will, in the last days, divide up the land of Israel. However, they will face the judgment of God for doing so (Joel 3:1-2).

NATURAL GAS DISCOVERY

Although there have been some recent noteworthy discoveries of oil and natural gas in Israel, the following quote from the Wall Street Journal (week of December 30, 2010) is more than noteworthy: **“Big gas find sparks a frenzy in Israel.”** The

discovery is off Haifa and is the largest gas reserve discovered in Israel. The discovery is worth at least 95 billion dollars, is estimated at more than 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and is the result of a joint U.S.-Israeli drilling operation. Of particular interest, France has stated that *"Israel has enough gas to become an exporter."* Discoveries such as this discovery may enable Israel to *"dip his foot in oil"* and draw *"oil from the flinty rock."* Old Testament verses that allude to this fact are:

- Genesis 49:1
- Genesis 49:25
- Deuteronomy 33:13
- Deuteronomy 33:19
- Deuteronomy 33:24
- Deuteronomy 32:12-13
- Ezekiel 38:8-13

Obviously, this type of wealth can be a blessing for Israel, but it is also capable of drawing enemies and potentially initiate the war of "Gog and Magog."

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY DISCOVERIES

According to the Tuesday, December 28, 2010 edition of the Mail Tribune, archaeologists have discovered ancient human remains (**teeth**) in Israel that *"changes the whole picture of evolution."* To quote the Tribune - - "Israeli archaeologists said Monday they may have found the earliest evidence yet for the existence of modern man, and if so, it could upset theories of the origin of humans. A Tel Aviv University team excavating a cave in central Israel said teeth found in the cave are about 400,000 years old and resemble those of other remains of modern man. The remains were examined with X-rays and CT scans and were then dated according to the layers of earth in which they were found. The accepted scientific theory is that modern man originated in Africa and migrated out of the continent. If the remains are definitely linked to modern human's ancestors, it could mean that modern man in fact originated in what is now Israel. The study has been published in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology.

In the past, we have discussed the three major types of methods of dating ancient artifacts-remains, and their unreliability. Let's look at the criteria that modern science and the theory of evolution uses to determine the age of the universe, earth, man, and other assorted objects of interest (such as the aforementioned remains that are supposed to be 400,000 years old). Currently, there are three methods that are used for dating purposes. The methods are Carbon 14, Radiometric Dating (or Radioisotope Dating), and Index Fossils.

Carbon 14

Carbon 14 is probably the most recognized of the three dating methods and is based on the simple principle of the ratio between carbon 12 (C-12) and carbon 14 (C-14). Here is how it works. Carbon 12 is a stable form of carbon and along with the gas nitrogen 14 (N-14), they are both naturally found in our atmosphere. When N-14 is bombarded by cosmic rays from outer space, the radioactive isotope C-14 is formed. Being a cyclical process, C-14 is continually being formed and decaying back into N-14. Living things (plants, animals, and man) absorb C-12 and C-14 atoms while breathing and eating. However, once an animal, plant, or human dies, they stop absorbing C-12 and C-14 atoms, and the unstable C-14 atoms begin to revert back to N-14. As a result, the ratio of C-12 to C-14 atoms will change over time. The rate the C-14 atoms will change back into N-14 is known as the half life, and the half life for C-14 is 5,730 years. That means that after 5,730 years, one-half of the C-14 will be left from the time of death, and so on until the C-14 has exhausted itself. Therefore, to use the carbon 14 method to date a past living plant, animal, or human, the amount of C-12 is assumed to remain constant and is compared to the amount of the C-14 that is left. However, the carbon 14 dating method does have its limits as follows:

- Carbon 14 can only be used to date past living things
- Carbon 14 can yield somewhat ballpark dates up to about 5,000 years
- In the 1940's, Dr. William Libby was credited with the discovery of the carbon 14 dating method. At the time, he acknowledged there was at least a 23% error rate. Today, it is known that the error rate can easily exceed 50%
- In about five half-lives, the amount of C-14 that remains will be very small. After 60,000 years, the C-14 will have been exhausted
- Carbon 14 depends on **four** assumptions. Because these assumptions are not repeatable or testable, they are not provable, and as a result, are assumptions. The four assumptions are:
 - (1) The decay rate has been constant
 - (2) There has been no contamination of the C-12 or C-14
 - (3) The original quantity of C-12 is assumed to be known
 - (4) There has never been a world-restructuring catastrophic flood

A quick review of the previous four assumptions should clearly illustrate that over a period of billions and millions of years, it is impossible to verify a constant decay rate, assume no contamination (water leaching, etc), and know the original quantity of the stable isotope C-12. Additionally, there is clear evidence of a worldwide catastrophic flood as 75% of the earth's crust is sedimentary! Even within its limitations, carbon 14 dating can often yield results that are at best, misleading.

Radiometric-Radioisotope

Radioisotope (or radiometric) is also commonly used for dating purposes and it depends on the same four assumptions as carbon 14. Radioisotope dating is normally limited to dating rocks. There are three basic kinds of rocks found on earth:

- Metamorphic (granite; the result of pressure and heat)
- Igneous (lava; the result of molten magma)
- Sedimentary (sediments such as sandstone, limestone, shale, etc)

Rocks that are dated with radioisotope methods are metamorphic and igneous rocks. The radioisotope dating technique compares the amount of unstable radioactive "*Parent*" elements and their "*Daughter*" elements. Daughter elements are elements that unstable radioactive elements (parent elements) decay into over a period of time. As an example, a popular radioisotope dating technique is uranium lead as uranium-238 spontaneously decays into lead-206. The rate that uranium-238 decays into lead-206 through its intermediate steps is known as its half life. The half life for uranium-238 decay into lead-206 is 4.5 billion years. There are also other radioisotope dating methods such as potassium argon, rubidium strontium, and lead-lead, but they all operate on the same basic principle.

If the uranium lead method is used to date a metamorphic or igneous rock, a measurement of the amount of the intermediate isotopes that are present in the rock, including the amount of uranium-238 and lead-206 is taken. This will yield the alleged age of the rock from the ratio of the uranium-238 to lead-206 that is found in the rock. A legitimate question is "*How accurate are radioisotope dating methods?*" Based on the current measurements of rocks of known ages, radioisotope dating methods are extremely inaccurate! The following are a few examples:

- The Kaupulehu Flow, Hualalai Volcano, Hawaii, is known to have erupted in 1800-1801. Radioisotope dating ranges from 140 million years to 2.96 billion years
- Lava flows from Mt. Kilauea, Hawaii, are less than 200 years old, yet radioisotope dating gives dates of around 21 million years
- Lava flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe, New Zealand, are less than 50 years old, yet radioisotope dating has yielded dates between 100 million years and 3,908 million years old
- Mt. Saint Helens erupted in May, 1980. Radioisotope dating of the lava flows yielded dates between 350,000 and 2.4 million years old

The previous examples give credibility to the impression that radioisotope dating does not work on rocks of known ages, but is assumed to work on rocks of unknown ages. In many cases, it is a fact that published dates are in reality, selected dates.

Index Fossils

The last dating method we will briefly consider is index fossils. First, a little history. During "*The Great Awakening*" the dominant geology was the belief that the fossil bearing rock strata on earth had been deposited by Noah's flood. However, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a new belief was modernized by Sir Charles Lyell and others in the 1800's who supported evolution, infinite ages, and the assumption earth's rock strata had built-up over long periods of time. Lyell (and others) also developed the "*Standard Geologic Column*." This column is assumed to represent a history of rocks and fossils that are currently found in the earth's crust. In the detailed representation of the column, there are three major Era's (Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic) that are divided into thirteen Periods (Precambrian up to Quaternary). The basic idea of the Geologic Column (which can be found in virtually every geology, biology, or evolution textbook) is to graphically display three viewpoints:

- The oldest rock layers should be at the bottom of the column
- The simplest forms of life should also be at the bottom of the column. Progressing upward, the life forms should become more complicated until you reach the Quaternary Period and the appearance of mammals and man
- Depicted life forms are assumed to have evolved over a time frame of at least 100 million years

Interestingly, all of the geological ages were developed before the advent of current dating methods. Therefore, the Geologic Column is an assumption that the evolution of simple to complex life forms should be graphically displayed in the earth's strata. Along with this assumption is the belief that the oldest rocks should be located at the bottom of the strata, and the newest rocks at the top of the strata. The core problem with the Geologic Column is that it does not exist anywhere on earth except in textbooks! In reality, the column should be about 100 miles in thickness, but actual columns average one mile in thickness. Additionally, only several of the thirteen Periods are normally found in any one location, there are numerous locations where Periods are totally absent, and there are abundant examples of strata occurring in the wrong evolutionary order (old rocks and fossils on top of recent rocks and fossils). Some examples of note are the Lewis Overthrust, the Appalachian region, areas of the Rockies, Swiss Alpine region, Scottish Highlands, mountains of India, and so on. Keep in mind that from the previous sections on dating methods, carbon 14 is used to date past

living things, and radioisotope is used to date igneous and metamorphic rocks. Also, remember there are three kinds of rocks – (1) igneous, (2) metamorphic, and (3) sedimentary. As fossils are normally found in sedimentary rocks, the carbon 14 and radioisotope methods do not apply.

Here is how the index fossil dating method works. Suppose you are digging in a rock strata and find a fossil of a trilobite. One of your initial considerations would be –“*How old is this trilobite fossil?*” By looking at a copy of the Geologic Column, you would see that trilobites are in the Cambrian Period. So, by looking at the time frames in the Period column, you can see that your trilobite fossil and the rock strata that contained the fossil are about 100 million years old. Therefore, the index fossil dating method uses the long ages of evolution to determine the age of the fossils, and the age of rocks are then determined by the age of index fossils! With this simple example, it should be obvious this is an example of “*circular reasoning*” by using the fossil to date the rocks, and the rocks to date the fossil! Consider the following quote:

“Dating methods may be further summarized by the simple statement that there are really no reliable long-time radiological clocks, and even the short-time radiocarbon clock is in serious need of repair”

Dr. Melvin Cook, Physical Chemistry, Yale

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Even though Christmas is arguably the most celebrated time of the year, and, from a Christian point of view, a time of remembrance of the birth of Christ, time and misconceptions have resulted in many beliefs (with little or no biblical basis) that have crept into common Christian thinking. Let’s briefly look at some of these misconceptions.

Christ and X

Recently, it seems as though the emphasis on signs that display the word Christmas has evolved into signs that have been shortened to the word “XMAS.” Therefore, a relevant question is, “what does the X stand for?” Christ is the title given to the Lord Jesus to signify that He is the Messiah. In Greek, this word is *Christos*. Since the first Greek letter of this title looks like an *x* in English, some have used it as an abbreviation for Christ. Many have claimed that this practice dates back to the first century, and there is solid evidence that shows this was practiced in the sixteenth century (probably as a cost-saving measure for the use of printing presses).

However, there is no question that many persons use the X today for the very purpose of eliminating Christ from Christmas. Additionally, secularists have been working overtime to remove any mention of God, Jesus, Christianity, and The Ten Commandments from our culture. As an example, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), Freedom from Religion Foundation (FRF), and other similar groups - including individual families - provide a steady drumbeat of lawsuits, threatening letters, and joint amicus briefs to remove any semblance of the Christian message. All insist, of course, that they are "*only defending the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, and that all individuals are free to worship however they wish – just don't try to do so on any public or government property.*"

Interestingly, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have started using the term "*Freedom of Worship*" instead of "*Freedom of Religion.*" That small change has vast implications should those words signal a change in official policy. *Freedom of religion* implies your freedom to assemble, proselytize, and conduct your religious beliefs. *Freedom of worship* is and can be limited to mere personal and private expressions of religious beliefs, negating all public demonstrations of what one believes. Therefore, worship can be confined to a designated place – or restricted to one's private thoughts.

So, can we use abbreviations or must we always write out Christmas? Remember that it is not sinful to use abbreviations, but it would be wrong for a Christian to use the X for an abbreviation if they were ashamed of Jesus Christ (Luke 9:26).

Christmas Trees

Some have cited the tenth chapter, verses 1-5, of Jeremiah as evidence that we should not use trees in our Christmas celebrations. The context of this passage reveals there is nothing in the text that forbids their usage as the first 16 verses are about how idols are completely worthless compared to God. However, if a Christmas tree is elevated to the point where it becomes an idol or takes precedence over the worship of God, then it would be wrong. However, many persons choose to use an evergreen tree as a reminder of the eternal life freely offered by Jesus Christ to all who will receive him as their Lord and Savior. This viewpoint keeps a Christmas tree in the proper perspective along with gifts and the other items that are related to Christmas.

Jesus Was Born On December 25

Although the date of Christ's birth is an issue that can generate much discussion, even though it may be unnecessary, the simple fact is we do not know what time of year Christ was born. Some believe that this date was chosen to coincide or replace the pagan holiday Saturnalia although there is no evidence of this.

Interestingly, the first reference to December 25 as Christ's birthday comes from Julius Africanus who wrote in the early part of the third century (some have alleged this date was adopted from a celebration known as Sol Invictus, although this celebration started half a century after Julius pointed to December 25). Although there are other arguments against December 25, there is too much speculation in these arguments to rule out or pinpoint any date, including December 25.

Christians should Not Celebrate Christmas

This argument is based on the perception that Christians should not celebrate Christmas because it was originally a pagan holiday and/or never commanded in scripture. The emphasis in the Christmas celebration should focus on remembering Jesus Christ becoming a human and coming into this world to save sinners. Although December 25 may not be the exact date that Christ was born, this should not detract from the importance of remembering Jesus Christ and what he did for all of mankind. If remembering the importance of Christ's birth is minimized or lost, then we begin to lose our heritage and future generations will likely return to paganism as did Israel who eventually forgot who their God was and ultimately embraced worldly ideas.

As a side note, Halloween has been drastically changed from its original meaning of All Hallows Eve in which one was supposed to prepare for worship the next morning on All Saints Day. Today, Halloween has been turned into a celebration of Satan, demons, and wickedness in the name of fun and celebration which is in direct contrast to Isaiah 5:20 *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."* Sadly, modern society promotes Halloween as a celebration which is then followed by Thanksgiving (with little thought of "thankful reflection") and then quickly into Christmas that centers more on the giving of gifts than the Giver of Gifts as found in James 1:7. As Christians, should we spend more time reflecting on the first three chapters of Luke, Philippians 2:5-11, and the first 14 verses of John?

ENVIRONMENTALISM

A growing threat to modern society and the church today is the versatile and multifaceted environmentalist movement. Although its emphasis can often be subtle, it can often exert immense power to control not only the environment but the lives of people and commerce. As an example, consider the following examples:

- Recent battle over water and fish in the Klamath basin

- Current battle over water and farmers in the Sacramento Delta
- Restrictions on drilling for oil (Alaska and off-shore)
- Global concern over “global warming”
- Growing restrictions placed on carbon dioxide emissions
- An emphasis on “carbon footprint”
- Increasing use of a “Green Leaf” symbol on vehicles (i.e., Subaru, Ford, Chevrolet, etc)
- Global Warming Scale warning (next to the MSRP sheet) on all new vehicles
- Increased use of “Green” buildings (Eagle Point and Hwy. 62, etc)

Without a doubt, the protection of the environment is an advantageous goal. Additionally, Genesis 1:26-28 clearly defines man’s unique relation to creation - Man was God’s representative in ruling over the creation and underscored his relationship as above the rest of creation, and Genesis 1:28 directs man to fill the earth and oversee its operation as the representative of God. However, a dilemma quickly appears when the perceived importance of the environment is placed ahead of mankind. A classic example is a recent tragedy that occurred in the state of Washington. Multiple firefighters died fighting a forest fire when their pleas for aerial water drops to help secure their position were ignored because taking water from the local streams might endanger the fish in the streams.

Although the reach of environmentalism is often subtle, its authority appears to be influencing multifaceted areas of daily life to adhere to its perception of priorities. To gain a basic understanding of environmentalism that can be used for personal study and/or families, schools, class rooms, home schools, and churches, a well produced and informative program (Resisting The Green Dragon) that consists of 12 half-hour programs on 4 DVD’s is available from www.ResistingTheGreenDragon.com. This program is based on James 4:7 (“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”), and features numerous renowned and biblically based speakers (Focus On The Family, etc). Some of the topics are (1) Environmentalism has become a new religion, (2) Environmentalism’s policies are devastating the world’s poor, (3) Environmentalism threatens the sanctity of life, (4) Environmentalism is targeting our youth, and (5) Environmentalism’s vision is global.

RESOURCES

- Resisting the Green Dragon, www.ResistingTheGreenDragon.com
- Institute of Creation Research, Acts & Facts, December 2010, XMAS

- Answers In Genesis, December 28, 2010, Miscellaneous Misconceptions About Christmas
- Mail Tribune, Tuesday, December 28, 2010, Archaeologists discover ancient human remains
- Joel Rosenberg, Flash Traffic, December 28, 2010 and December 30, 2010