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Truth To Wonder

Ministries Magazine

Volume 3 Issue 10 January 2023

truthtowonder.org

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Welcome

Thanksgiving unto God for bringing us to the start of another year. Whilst 2022 was the latest year in a series of difficult and troubling times with the Russia/Ukraine war, huge political instability in our own nation, cost of living crisis and numerous bouts of strike action, we must pause and reflect on how very good Our Lord God has been to us throughout all these issues.

It is in the light of this crumbling of a nation, the demise of a once greatly blessed people who lived under the Law of God, that we must seize the moment and pray God strengthens us daily to be a light in this ever deepening darkness.

Our nation is filled with a populace that is all too aware that society is plummeting let alone crumbling and it is bewildered and panicked as to why this is so. Herein is the opportunity to speak boldly but meekly

(not weakly but using the power of the Word of God with love for others, seeing that they need the light of the Gospel more than anything else in life) of the Lord and His Word. We must be wise in seeing that much of society today, especially the youth, are unaware as to who Jesus even is and as to what *sin* is as well. We must be sober of mind to realise that it is all well and good preaching of the love of God and the salvation offered by Christ Jesus but if those to whom we speak have no awareness of **their** position before God and **who** God is in that He is their maker.

We must educate them as to the perfect standards of God and why their pride filled estimation of themselves counts for nothing before a morally perfect and just God who abhors sin and will have no communion with it. Those to whom we speak must be made aware of the Law so that they may see the need of a Saviour. Then they can be shown the full grace of God in that He gave His Only Begotten Son knowing that He alone would be sufficient sacrifice to atone for our burdensome sins.

No doubt this is a heavy thought and one that will bring many of us to worry and fear of offending or even placing ourselves in danger as after all who likes to hear they are wicked sinners heading for eternal damnation! Yet this is where thankfulness unto God for His providential care for each of us is so very important to strengthen the heart of the servant of Christ. Thankfulness sets our minds eye towards God and we see how He has cared for us throughout all hardships and that as He has cared for us before why would He stop now?

So reflection is a good and healthy tonic to the soul and breeds a spirit of joyful service unto God so that we do not fear speaking of Him to the lost but instead we delight in it! Our delight will be fuelled by the deep assurance to the very heart by the Holy Ghost that we are honouring our God and so He will honour us come that great hour when we are called home to eternal rest. So let us come now to God in thankful prayer.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank you so very much for all your care and mercy you have extended towards us this past year. We thank you for knowing all our needs long before we even knew them ourselves and we marvel in the abundance of your providential love towards each of your children.

Lord we come before you in humility, knowing that we cannot add even another minute unto our lives by our strength or skill so we ask that you will go before

us in all things. We call upon your goodness and grace that you are a giver of good gifts and we rest in your promise that you keep no good thing from us. Give us hearts of faith so that we trust what you do bring to our days Lord. We are weak of spirit and faith and we do not see the glorious weaving of your blessing through each moment of our days. Forgive us we pray Lord when we stumble in trust of your goodness, when we doubt how the events of a time can be good for us. Lord we appeal to your faithfulness, that when we stumble so you will renew us in faith once more and open our eyes to see the wondrous movements of your will and how it is all for our good and your glory. Bring us rest we pray Lord so that we trust in your revelation and assurance that you make all things beautiful in the fullness of time.

This we do ask in Jesus name; Our Saviour and Redeemer, Our Blessed King forevermore. Amen.

Wait for the Promise

The beginning of the New Year is for many an exciting and hopeful time with thoughts racing away on what could be achieved or may be heading our way in the coming year. YouTube is filled with videos from young Christians who have all amazingly determined '5 easy steps' or '6 easy steps' to knowing 'what God has planned for you', or some amazing new way to discern God's plan for your life. Initially I found these videos interesting. As an immature believer I would watch some of the videos and hope to find the key to some of the great questions of my life. Each video seemingly applied Biblical principle to their assertions but they almost all omitted something crucial. Study. That word that many of the new bible versions have strangely removed from their pages no less.

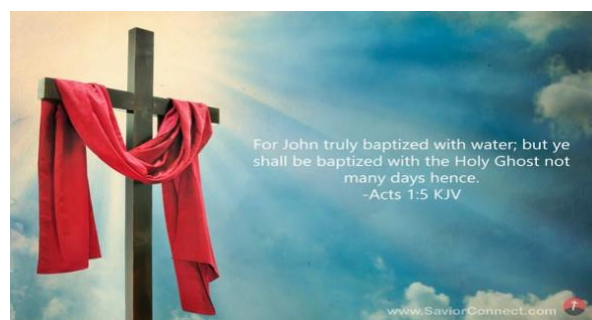
These types of how to 'know God's will for your life' are the diet pills of Christianity. They promise to give you the desired information of what lies ahead in your life without any 'tiresome' Biblical study. You can simply watch a 10 minute video that contains some loose theological musings, look at your life and see how these universal vagaries of statements such as, 'if the life choice you made has made your life happier, easier and less stressful then clearly God has blessed it and this is what He wills for you to do.' Hmm, ok. On studying the Scriptures I don't see that logic applied in many places, if indeed anywhere. Abraham's decision to believe God's promise meant he had to leave a comfortable, familiar life and swap it for one filled with danger and strain. Moses made the decision to turn away from being a prince of Egypt to become a leader of slaves whose own people often railed against him. This was all God's will but I do not read of

a life that became easier and less stressful, yet Moses KNEW he was doing the Lord's will.

The examples of a life being filled with hardship, strain, toil, sacrifice and even death in service of doing the Lord's will fill the pages of the Bible. Yet today we modern Christians often wrongly decide that if something comes easily and is comfortable and pleasing then it must be of God. What complete foolishness. The devil comes in pleasing forms, disguised as an angel of light so that he might ensnare you in a gilded cage of temporal ease and comfort so that you fall away from seeking after Christ. Even the world is often more alert to this peril than the modern Christian as doesn't the well known saying apply that, 'anything worth while doesn't come easily'. Yet modern Christian teaching dictates otherwise.

Well after this lengthy introduction let's leave the mess that is liberal theology to the side and return once more unto what God has said through His Word. Turn now if you will to Acts 1 and read through the chapter.

In this chapter we read of the disciples eagerness to discover from the risen Lord if He will now establish again Israel's kingdom. They enquire of Christ this information after seemingly relegating in their minds the importance of what He has instructed them to do and wait for, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The disciples desire is the same as many today, to secure temporal security and comfort. It is completely understandable for we are but flesh and blood confined by time and so we seek a peaceful and secure existence filled with happiness and plenty. Yet is this what we are to strive for, particularly as we look ahead to the coming year?



The disciples hopeful enquiry of the Lord is sandwiched by Him directing them to remain in Jerusalem and await the baptism of the Holy Ghost which will come in "not many days hence" (verse 5). Whilst we mortal sinners are primarily concerned with our immediate, temporal existence, Our Lord is earnestly directing us to seek after the treasures of heaven. These treasures being the gifts that would be

bestowed upon them by the Holy Ghost so as to establish the Early Church.

Our Lord knows our tendencies and frailties (Hebrews 4:15) and saw then in the disciples that their enquiry was of a desire to secure a knowledge of the future date of the arrival of Christ's kingdom on Earth. They longed to know when everything would be established and that once they knew these things they would have contentment and security. Yet Christ does not divulge this to them, instead He says to them, "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power". Christ does not give the information they sought after for it was not in their best interests to know. For if they knew that the establishment of His kingdom would not transpire for 2000 years and counting, this could've easily dampened their earnestness in preaching the gospel with all potency and urgency. A laziness of spirit could've easily taken hold of the Early Church as opposed to the heavenly immediacy history has shown took place.

So after Our Lord's ascension in verses 9-11, we read of the faithful disciples and followers of Christ gathering together in an upper room. The number of these faithful numbered 120 (verse 15) and what is wonderful to read is that they were of "one accord in prayer and supplication". All gathered were coming together in united prayer and heartfelt desire to serve the Lord and so they waited as they had been commanded to.

Some theologians ascribe an interesting importance to the number 120 in the Bible. Some see it as a 'Divine waiting period'. Consider that God warned Noah that there would be 120 years before the Flood would descend (Genesis 6:3), a time allotted for mankind to cry out in repentance before the Lord before judgment. This judgment would cleanse the world of its rampant evil, giving life through faith in God a renewed hope.

Moses, the Law Giver, lived for 120 years and died without his eyes being dimmed (Deuteronomy 34:7) came to the end of his allotted days whilst still in seeming good health. His death marked the closing of the wilderness wanderings of Israel, their time of waiting to enter the Promised Land had come to a close.

120 regularly features in payments of goods and/or money in tribute to Israel, for instance in 1 Kings 9:14, we read of King Hiram sending 120 talents of gold to Solomon. Similarly in 1 Kings 10:10, the Queen of Sheba also gifts 120 talents of gold.

The Levites, the priestly tribe of Israel, contained 120 priests who would stand alongside the east side of the sacrificial altar whilst sounding trumpets along with others priests would play cymbals and lyres. This musical declaration would resound throughout the temple grounds as to the service of Israel before God and His receiving presence (2 Chronicles 5:12). The purpose of this tangent is to highlight how **waiting on the Lord** is a consistent Biblical teaching so as to know and follow His will. We are on His time, He is not on ours and yet we often live as though He should be. Through waiting on the Lord we show our humility and reliance on His provision and thus in His goodness He gives abundantly for He withholds no good thing from us (Romans).

This is then evident in the rest of Acts Chapter 1 as the gathering decide on a replacement for the traitorous Judas. Note that to be considered eligible for this role the candidate must have seen the risen Lord Jesus and had been a faithful follower throughout Christ's earthly ministry (verses 21-22). Just these two verses destroy the arguments of some deluded 'preachers' put forward today that they are 'Apostles'. They have not been alive for 2000 years so that they could've walked alongside Christ throughout His ministry and then gazed upon His risen face. That is the end of the debate.

Having clarified this un-needed debate in modern Christendom with but a paragraph, let's now see how the gathering determined the will of God going forwards. Firstly, Peter referred to Scripture. He refers all those gathered to the fact that the betrayal and subsequent gruesome demise of Judas fulfilled the Word of God through the Psalmist (verse 20). Herein is our base layer, knowledge of Scripture. When we know Scripture well we see how the Lord continually moves through history to show how His Word is ALWAYS correct. This is the foundation stone, for let all heaven and earth pass away but His Word shall remain (Romans). Once we acknowledge our limits and lean on God's perfect knowledge and wisdom then we have a calm, consistent baseplate on which to build our decision. You will see the knowledgeable and humble Christian making far quicker, sound, rational, well thought out decisions purely on these grounds, for inner confidence gives clarity of mind. It is not based on 'feelings' or 'interpretations', these are flimsy and easily tricked or changed at any given moment thus giving consistent uncertainty.

Then with this reference point of the Word of God and it's infallibility in ALL things established, prayer is then engaged in by the gathering (verse 24). So we have hearts humbled before the purity and infallibility of God's Word, then hearts seeking the goodness of

God by calling upon Him as their loving Father. Humility is woven with trust, a more beautiful union there is not. At a wedding two come together in humility acknowledging they need another to bring them good and godly physical companionship and that they are trusting in the love declared by the other so that they may reserve themselves solely unto that one person for all their life.

Then after Scriptural study and application of that study alongside faithful and earnest prayer, we are to set about our task in all faith that the Lord will direct our steps. In verse 26 we read that the gathering 'cast lots' or gave their votes for their choice of out two candidates, Joseph called Barnabas, and Matthias (who would be chosen by God through this vote). The Lord has blessed us with a freedom of choice but to select the right choice we are to go to Him with these two foundation stones firmly in place, Scriptural study and prayer. Then we can step out in faith trusting in what God will do exactly what He said He'll do, direct our steps when we seek to honour and glorify Him. It is a most beautiful relationship established here between Christ and His followers. That we are not to sit around and wait idly for some sign or intervention for each life decision. Such a way of living is ripe for over emotional jumping in over poorly interpreted life circumstances. It's like saying I had a bad day at work therefore the Lord wants me to find a new job, or my car broke down so God has a new one set aside for me. It's reading into things based on your understanding, something we are told not to do in Scripture (lean not on thine own understanding – Proverbs 3:5-6).



Instead we are to study Scripture, learn of God and His goodness and how He moves throughout all history so that we become familiar with His nature and movements. I know the hopes and fears of my wife because I have desired to know *her*, not just interpret what I think she wants based on my preferences. So it is with God. Seek to learn of Him through Bible study and you will soon learn of His wonderful nature and attributes. This then will move you to humble prayer where you will delight in His power and wisdom and thus be glad to admit your

failings. Why? Because you will understand that He loves you despite of all your failings and that He provides for you purely out of His grace. In this you then remember all His merciful provisions throughout your life and you joyfully desire to please your Lord. This then is the plowed ground ready to receive the seed of the Spirit of God. Then as this grows over time it becomes easier to see His will unfold before you like a plant becomes more visible as it grows.

So as you set out into 2023 bear all this in mind. There are no 'quick steps to knowing God's will for your life'. That is just spiritual laziness and laziness gets it's rewards, nothingness. Instead study Scripture daily. Learn of your Lord. Pray daily, share everything with Him, cultivate the Holy Ghost as A.W Tozer noted, the Holy Ghost is a person after all and as such a relationship with Him can be grown so closely that each time He but whispers to your heart of the Lord's will for you, you will hear it clearly and so step out assuredly.

I do not know what the Lord has in place for me in 2023. I do not profess to know whether it will be good or bad, pleasant or hard, filled with blessings or frequented with trials, that I leave to Him. All I seek to achieve this coming year is to know more of Him so that I come to Him with an open, humble heart so that I can know my choices in life are pleasing to Him. Then I will have peace, then my year (if the Lord grants me that time) will have been a good year for sure. Amen.

Jonathan Badger

As in the days of Noah

Matthew 24:37

³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

This arresting warning of what the last days will be like in their similarity to the days of Noah before the Flood are given by Jesus Christ Himself, the greatest hell-fire preacher ever. An unpalatable alert to many

today, strikingly a rather unpopular message in many church circles, Christ's message should resonate in us loudly!

Consider what the days of Noah entailed first of all, Genesis 6:5 gives us the answer.

5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This one verse is sufficient in providing us with an awful image of what mankind had descended to in this age. It is a window into the past that grows ever bleaker the more it is thought upon. How evil must mankind have been in those days that **every** thought of the heart and imagination was evil **continually**! There was no break, no respite from the vile sin being unceasingly committed by **all** people save Noah and his family. That is a spine shuddering thought! When Christians today say, 'The Lord can't be far away, just look at all the wickedness in the world today', I think to myself that it has to get a lot worse yet for Christ's warning in Matthew 24:37 to come to fullness. Yes our world is crumbling, yes evil is gaining ever more territory in the hearts of people but I do still see the restraining hand of the Holy Ghost at work. I still see genuine and goodly deeds being done by many without evil motivations or pride or selfishness. I see these loving and selfless actions done by the godless as well as with Christians and sadly sometimes more so.

Yet with this being said, I can see the cogs turning in the machine, I can see the beginnings of the rise of such a world begin to emerge on the horizon of time. The pre-Flood world in which Noah lived was a pit of sin where evil existed without boundaries or restraint. Even the once innocent things of life had become so corrupted that God in His infinite wisdom had decreed was too wicked to be allowed to continue. So too such things are creeping into view.

Video games are a massive industry, worth 220 billion U.S dollars in 2022 and is projected to be worth 584 billion dollars in 2030. As it is such a money making industry (remember the love of money is the root of all evil, 1 Timothy 6:10), developers are looking for new ways to get gamers money into their pockets. The developer of the Oculus Virtual Reality system, (now owned by Meta Facebook) Palmer Luckey has created a horrifying new twist on his original VR technology. He has developed a VR headset that contains three mini explosives. Why on earth would he do that you ask? Well he has decided that gamers

want the 'ultimate immersion' into a virtual reality experience where if you die in game, you die in reality! So in his creation if you die in the game the screen will show a particular shade of red which will then trigger the explosives contained in the headset. These explosives will detonate thus immediately killing the wearing! It is a sick creation from an evil mind that screams of the fingerprints of Satan.

Mr Luckey got his inspiration for his devise from a Japanese anime called *Sword Art Online* which depicts a world where VR gamers access a virtual world using their mind and stimulates the five senses to mimic reality. In the anime, after 10,000 players log in to the game it locks the gamers into an existence where they must complete the game or die in virtual life and in real life through their brains being microwaved. It is a deeply evil fantasy that has inspired one of the world's most enterprising computer programmers.

Mr Luckey, who is worth 1.4 billion U.S dollars, has announced that the project is halfway to completion, with the half that is complete being the half that kills the wearer alarmingly.



Peter Luckey – creator of a literal killing machine

It is developments like these that are hidden away from the masses that are the true steps towards a world being so evil that every thought of the heart and mind is evil continually. Friends, we are to be spiritually alert to these subtle, slow developments as it's such sinister steps that reflect the vile mind behind them, the devil. It seems that Christendom is divided into two equally blinkered camps today. One camp denies that Christ's warning in Matthew 24:37 is a real, tangible warning of future days and that instead He is at work establishing His kingdom on Earth now and His return was a spiritual one (post-millennialism). Such hopeful thinking creates a church that is denying the evil in the world and often creates an insular and light faith that only causes the world to laugh in understandable derision.

Then there are those who are obsessed with conspiracy theories and jump at every new development in politics/societal shift in the news as a 'sign of the end times'. They make bold declarations

on things such as the COVID vaccine being the 'Mark of the Beast' for example (which it isn't, the mark of the Beast is 666 and located in the wrist or forehead – I didn't see many people getting vaccinated in their foreheads). This school whips up a spiritual frenzy in the church making believers scared and coldly cut off from the world in anticipation that Christ is going to snatch them out of the world at any given second.

I join with Spurgeon who wept on the state of the church in his day and all the false teaching that abounded even then when he lamented, 'Who will speak for my Jesus?' I will speak for my Jesus if no one else shall! Yes the world is decaying. Yes it is growing ever darker with each passing year as the things that God hates become ever more celebrated in our world. Yes there are developments with ever increasing pace that point towards the closing of time but we are not there yet. Read the words of your Lord I implore you! When He warned that mankind's every thought and motivation of mankind's heart and mind shall be constant evil it was not a metaphor, it was stark reality being offered as a warning just as it was stark reality for those who perished adrift from God in the Flood. So there are many awful steps that must be taken before He returns in His awesome glory and might.

We must be ready for these steps, these dark hours settling upon the world and resist them not to delay the coming of Our Lord, for we want Him to return with all speed! We are to resist the dark hours of the spread of sin because it serves Him and fulfils His command to us to be a light in the world and to preach the Gospel. We are to do so in the same hope as all the saints before us have, that we might be used of God to lead another away from damnation and towards glorification in Christ Jesus. Thus we might be found busy about our Masters work when He does return for us, again fulfilling His Word through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the true utilising of the power of the Holy Ghost, the bold declaration of the Gospel to all peoples despite threats and persecution. It is the living of a life rich in the fruits of the Spirit even when suffering in Christ's name is endured! It has nothing to do with speaking tongues, healings, visions, securing health and wealth; it is for the delivery of the Word, the Gospel of Christ. This is why our churches are dead today, the Holy Ghost is not there! You may have 200 in your church each week but are they there with a burning desire to learn more of Christ? Are they eager to spread the good news? Do they hold the Word of God so dear that it is more vital to them than the breath in their lungs? Do they yearn for the appearing of the Lord? Those of the Early Church could answer with conviction, can you?

Do not be mislead, the end is coming but there is much to transpire yet. Gird your loins as Scripture says, be prepared for increasing hardship and persecution and fiercer spiritual battles. Yet pray for the joyful hope that even if this terrible reality must take place as Christ said it will, then so too must the wonderful reality of our place in heaven also be. For the Lord uses even the darkness as a reluctant servant to bring about the fulfilment of His will and His Word. Study your Bible, pray for wisdom and understand that to gain wisdom is to see the pain, suffering and evil of the world but that it also illuminates the truth of ALL Scripture. Amen

By Jonathan Badger

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT REST ON HISTORICAL EVIDENCE?

Christianity is an historical phenomenon therefore it can be investigated on the basis of historical evidence. The witness of the first three centuries speaks clearly for the authenticity of the New Testament records. With reference to the existence of Christ, that Judaea was where He taught, that He was executed by Pilate, and that Christianity spread through the Roman world we have the following: ***Annals of Tacitus, Biographies of Suetonius, and Letters of Pliny.***

Further, the New Testament is composed of histories and records. When we read it we find the names of Roman Emperors e.g. Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius. Roman Governors e.g. Cyrenius, Pilate, Felix, Festus, Sergius Paulus and Gallio. There are Jewish kings e.g. Herod the Great, Archelaus, Antipas, and Agrippa First and Second.

Classical History and the writings of Josephus testify that the above listed existed in the time mentioned and held the offices the New Testament says they held, and held them in the chronological order in which their names are recorded. Further, the actions recorded in the New Testament of the above personages is in perfect keeping with their historical character.

We also have definite historical information preserved in the Epistles of Paul, which are regarded by all serious historians as genuine products of the first Christian generation. Faith according to the Bible is founded on certain facts

and events that took place in HISTORY. Some of those facts are staggering. For example if a man is convinced that Jesus of Nazareth existed before He came into this world, he is facing a serious difficulty if that same man believes Jesus to have been by ordinary means the child of Joseph and Mary.

Look, the New Testament is the primary source of information about Jesus. That is why in the last two centuries the critics of the Christian Faith have continually attacked the reliability of the Biblical documents. Germany has been notorious for this assault, these attacks rose with the rise of the evolutionary view of history.



One of the leading German critics F.C. Baur assumed (wrongly), that most of the New Testament was not written until late in the Second Century A.D. He thought that the New Testament writings came from myths and legends that developed between the life of Jesus and the time they were written down much later. Well, apart from anything else Twentieth Century archaeological evidence has completely disproved Baur's thesis.

At one time most New Testament critics were dating New Testament documents at the earliest between 130 – 150 A.D. Well let me tell you something there was no basis for dating any book of the New Testament after 80 A.D. That was later revised to between the 40's and 80's of the First Century. Today, the Twenty First Century there is growing evidence that points to the Gospels circulating within a very short time of the Lord's death and resurrection.

It is sad that today huge numbers of believers do not realise the amount of manuscript evidence

there is with reference to the New Testament. There are thousands of extant manuscripts and fragments. There is growing evidence that points to the Gospels circulating within twenty years or less of the events recorded.

Lets compare this manuscript numbers question of the New Testament with the trifling amount of those supporting Classical Literature

1. The history of Thucydides (460 – 400 B.C.) 8 manuscripts dated about 900 A.D. Well over a thousand years after he wrote it.
2. The manuscripts regarding the history of Herodotus are very late and few in number. Approximately a 1600 year gap from the Fifth Century B.C.
3. Aristotle penned his poetics about 343 B.C. The earliest copy we have is 1100 A.D., also there are only five manuscripts.
4. Caesar wrote his history of the Gallic Wars between 58 and 50 B.C. There are 9 – 10 copies a thousand years later.
5. The Iliad does have an impressive 643 manuscripts, still far short of the New Testament though.
6. Euripides wrote in the Fifth Century B.C. There is a 1600 year gap to copies of his works.
7. Horace wrote in the First Century B.C. There is a 900 year gap to the earliest copies.
8. Virgil First Century B.C. 350 year gap to copies.
9. Livy. He lived about the time of Christ. A 500 year gap.
10. Thucydides (not the same as the first one listed), he lived at the end of the First Century and beginning of the Second A.D.

Look brethren the New Testament has a mountain of manuscript authority, far more than any piece of literature from antiquity. You may be even more surprised to know that around 97% of all extant New Testament manuscripts support the Textus Receptus on which the AV Bible is based.

I will close with a quote from Sir Frederic Kenyon director and principal librarian at the British Museum, and authority on manuscripts and a

non-believer. He states, 'Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.' He further states, 'Any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed'.

We could continue on a very long time but my advice to you dear reader is pick up your Bible, read it and believe it.

God bless.

By Dr David Badger

Pleasing No One

It is possible to be so intent of pleasing people that you end up pleasing no one. The Church of England is fast becoming an expert in this unwanted skill. During last month's World Cup, the Church of England published guidance for churches to 'utilise' the World Cup as a means of reaching people with the Gospel. Suggestions provided in this publication included having football themed Nativity plays where the Wise Men wear football shirts, blow vuvuzela's (the bee sounding trumpets that many hated during the World Cup of 2010) and enter/exit the stage to the song *Three Lions*. Shepherds are to be depicted as playing football in the fields, not guarding sheep by night, and the angels are to herald the birth of a Saviour 'greater than Ronaldo'! The angels are suggested to sing 'He's coming soon' to the tune of the aforementioned *Three Lions*. The pinnacle of all this blasphemous trash is that contained in the manger is not the Incarnated Christ but a football! This 'nativity play' is entitled *The Greatest Of All Time* is just one of a series of football related suggestions in the CofE publication entitled *Making The Most Of The World Cup Final 18th December 2022*. This document also alerts vicars to the fact that it might be best to reschedule traditional Carol Services on that date to the night before, "in case there are penalties", thus keeping people at home.



Football themed Nativity Plays – outreach brought to you by the Church of England

I'll just pause for a minute to let that all sink in. If it wasn't so serious it would be hilarious! Yet it is serious, this drivel could turn untold masses away from Christ as they look on this blasphemous nonsense as just another example of how childish and idiotic modern 'Christianity' has become. The only ones that seem to think this rubbish is a good idea is the completely out of touch leaders of the Church of England. They will be patting themselves on the back for another 'inspired' means of social outreach whilst those they are reaching out to look on it all as too pathetic to be appealing.

If you think I'm being overly harsh just read what Peter Hitchens, a secular writer for the Daily Mail had to say on the matter; he wrote on November 26th 2022:

You could accuse me of a sense of humour failure if any of this was remotely funny. But it is only pathetic, the actions of a body which has been defeated, struggling to stay popular by toadying to its enemy.

I think this drivel from the CofE is proof.

The leadership of that Church, always the first to surrender to the spirit of the age, has even advised vicars to avoid having carol services on the Sunday before Christmas in case they clash with some football tournament now raging in the Middle East.

A lot of us would be glad if the Church was prepared to risk a bit, to make the point that there is a higher authority in the world than FIFA and a lasting glory that remains after the TV lights have been switched off and the millionaire commentators have flown home.

Well, there you have it. The frustrated voice of so many resounding out against the spineless, incontinent nature of the modern church. As Mr Hitchens noted, many would like to see the Church take a risk. Whilst he is focusing on this one limited subject matter, the point remains. The Church did it's most wonderful work in the Lord's name when it 'took a risk' to stand apart from the world and show what it truly means to be a servant of Christ. This is exactly what first brings ALL true Christians to faith in Christ, that unique faith that joyfully turns away from all the muck and drivel of the world and declares it sinful. Instead it stands steadfast to the narrow path to redemption in Christ Jesus,

happily turning away from the world and all it's sinful vices that do nothing but lead to broken lives and ultimately the eternal grave. This is the lifeblood of the Church, this is what pulled the masses into the churches. It was the very power of God being wielded by the Holy Ghost. It wasn't any hastily drawn up 'outreach program' that appeals to bring social groups to the populace as opposed to bringing them the true Gospel message.

The modern Christian Church is failing the people. It is failing to bring them true hope especially in an age where so, so many are struggling in just keeping the lights on and putting food on the family plates. Ultimately though it is failing the Lord God. It is no wonder that the Lord speaks so angrily against the Laodicean Church, the age in which we dwell today.

Let us return once more to the simplicity of the Gospel, relying on the power of the Word of God and ministry of the Holy Ghost to do what He has always done, bring souls to Christ through the work of faithful followers of the Lord Jesus. So many crave that simple hope. They are not entertained by empty performance and pageantry, they want truth, they want answers, they want hope, a hope that is clear and certain. That hope is the Gospel of the Risen Lord Jesus. Take it to them in all it's powerful simplicity, pray for the words to speak and then watch what God can do with but a humble seed of truth and faith.

By Jonathan Badger

Ancient Surrogacy

The Genesis account of Abraham and Sarah becoming impatient with God and thus using Hagar as a surrogate mother to bring about the promised offspring is familiar to many of us (Genesis 16:1-4). Sarah wrongly adopted the cultural norm of the time in the Ancient Middle East, the use of surrogate mothers. We know that this is not just a Biblical myth but has, as always, evidence outside of the Bible to support it's claims as accurate historical records.



Here is an Assyrian marriage contract (much like modern day pre-nuptials – there is nothing new under the sun!) dated circa 2000 BC. This contract relates how if a married couple are unable to produce children within the first two years of marriage, a female slave could be appointed as a surrogate. Thus Sarah was following local custom, not the promise of God. We are all too the same in our lives as we often grow impatient with God and what we expect to have in our lives and so we adopt the ways of modern life to bring about our desires, rather than waiting on the Lord. Such practice has seen the collapse of the church in western society as it hurries from one cultural fad/custom to the next to bring about it's desires (full churches) rather than relying on the promise of God that He will bring the people to His house of prayer.

The contract shown in the picture above is but one and of similar marriage contracts unearthed in the Middle East, all of a similar time period to that of the Biblical Patriarchs. These contracts also stipulated the treatment of the resulting offspring of any surrogacy. These contracts borrowed from the Ancient Middle Eastern Hammurabi Code and ensured that if any children born to the husband and wife after the surrogacy were produced, the surrogate child and it's mother must be suitably cared for. Law 146 of the Hammurabi Code spoke against the sale or dismissal of the surrogate mother and if an adopted son was dismissed, he would be entitled to receive one third of the family inheritance (Law 191). Furthermore according to the Hammurabi Code, on the death of the father, the children of the first wife and children of the surrogate slave would receive equal inheritance portions, although the first born would receive a preferential share (Law 170).

As you can see the decision that Sarah came to to utilise these worldly customs came at a known cost, even according to the flawed moral standards of the world. Yet such was the impatience of Sarah and Abraham in following his wife's desires over the promise of God, that she happily signed up to such heavy bonds just to bring about her desires on her terms. Again, how many of us have fallen similarly! Many of us have made enormous life decisions, preferring our selection that placates our immediate desires and urges over waiting on the Lord for a good and wholesome alternative that is full of heavenly blessing. Many godly men and indeed women have rushed into marriage over an urge to be wed and have therefore married the first person to come along rather than wait for the **right** person to come along.

A document from Mari, the capital of the Amorites during the time of Abraham records in particular that

if more children are born to parents who first used surrogacy, the adopted son would be the 'senior heir' and thus receive a double portion of inheritance.

So Abraham's reluctance to send Hagar and Ishmael away (Genesis 21:8-11) was his hesitancy to break local custom for he would've been well aware of these common societal codes. He required divine permission to go against these societal customs and it is a remarkable act of grace on behalf of God that He condescends to Abraham's plea that Hagar and Ishmael be taken care of by God. Even the greatest of men fall and fall spectacularly. Abraham had been given a unique promise from the Lord God, and had received many assurances that God would honour His promise of a son to him. Yet Abraham listened to Sarah over God (as Adam did with Eve remember) and embraced the seeming immediate satisfaction of the world and it's ways over patience and waiting on the promises of the Lord.

All of this is another reminder that the history of the Genesis account is very much accurate history and that human nature does not change even over millennia. Be patient in waiting on the provision of God for your days, whether it be in the seeking of a husband/wife; a child; a home or whatever it may be, do not fall as Abraham and Sarah did by attempting to hurry God along. He knows all the things you have need of and cares for you always knowing your weaknesses and frailties. Trust in Him and His eternal goodness and wait patiently on the revealing of His provision, you'll be glad you did!

By Jonathan Badger

Psalm 101 – Part 3

We resume our look at Psalm 101 at an apt verse considering the determination of many at New Year to live a better life, this verse being verse 4.

"A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person."

Firstly let us establish what a *froward heart* is. This word describes a proud, unrepentant, unyielding heart, a disobedient nature that refuses to be subject to the will and rule of God. It is the concise and superbly accurate definition of the basic nature of all humanity, for all are corrupted by sin, none are counted as righteous of themselves and all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10, 3:23).

Yet it is the desire of the Psalmist that this rebellious, disobedient and unyielding heart is banished from

him. Why? The Psalmist David understands through the ministry of the Holy Ghost that a proud and unyielding heart cannot ever come to know God and therefore cannot ever gain eternal life. Furthermore a proud and disobedient heart cannot gain any true substantive wisdom and joy in this life without humility before God. For to gain the wisdom of God, a heart must be humble to declare that it is wicked and deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9) and that to achieve any sort of gainful understanding of how to live a good and purposeful life, goodness and wisdom from a higher source (namely God) must be humbly sought after.



So David's first desire here is to be emptied of his wicked and disobedient heart so that he might be filled up with the goodness of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians today are obsessed with gaining the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit but they refuse to yield to His demands that they must first depart from a forward heart. Thus by their own stubbornness and refusal to yield to the written Word of God they are proving the very truth of it! A tragic irony indeed! To be filled with the Holy Spirit and His wonderful fruits we must first be emptied of a disobedient nature. He will not allow His goodness to be mingled with evil, that would grieve Him greatly and therefore a knowing pursuit of this mingling of the world and His power is a knowing blasphemy that shall not be forgiven (Matthew 12: 31-32). This is the terrible danger many in the church are nearing when they claim such power only to secure worldly pleasures and indulgences (see Prosperity Gospel and Word Faith preachers).

The godly heart knows what the Holy Ghost desires from us and knows this because it has yielded to His ministry that we are to be conformed or moulded ever more into the glorious nature of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yet this can only bloom when the heart is humble and sees it's need to depart from it's own natural fallen self and seize the perfect heart of God as their own.

At this time of year when as previously mentioned many are looking to live a 'better life', the simplest way of achieving this is to follow what David spoke of

here and that is to depart, leave behind for good our own proud, unyielding and disobedient heart.

You may think that your heart is already humbled before God and that you have long yielded your will unto God. Are you sure? Examine yourself and ask as to how you see your own life. Is each New Year greeted with fear? Is your heart even more troubled than this and so you go through each day troubled with doubt and concern as to what may develop that hour that may bring you stress and strain? Do you avoid confrontation in the Lord's name out of worry that sorrow will chase after you as a result? I believe a great many of us are so greatly troubled in spirit. Yet why so? As Christ spoke unto the frightened disciples during the storm, "Why are ye fearful, Oh ye of little faith?" Such fear brews in a heart that has not yielded itself unto the provision of God in **all** things. Yes you may have yielded your sinful heart unto Christ for deliverance from your sins and this is a joyful thing no doubt! Yet in the remnants of our fallen nature, that old man of sin plagues us still and leads us to doubt the need to bother Our Lord with other concerns in life. This develops a faith that is by nature fed by one of panic and strain, a faith that only pops up when we are in great need. When we are not in great need, we fumble through our days wearing ourselves down in reliance upon our strength, our skills, our ability to provide for our needs. Yes we know His assurance that Our Heavenly Father knows all the things we have need of, but we do not apply them to how we live! We have been proud and unyielding against the truth that we need Christ for **everything** in life, from the smallest of thing to the greatest of need, all is given by Him and through Him!

Do you see then that so many of us have not **departed** from a forward heart, we have merely pushed it down. Like the old drunkard who instead of removing himself from any place where alcohol is indulged in, they placate themselves by rationalising that it's ok because they are not drinking it themselves. Such a soul is proud and unyielding to the truth that they cannot trust themselves and that they can only trust in the provision of Christ to keep them from stumbling once more. Yet the provision of God is grasped when the fullness of His Word is lived. If I told my daughters to clean their room and they did half a job so that it was at least presentable, why would I reward them for fulfilling my request? They hadn't done so so why would any prize be forthcoming? To gain the reward of God in this life that is a fullness of spirit that is His own through the Holy Ghost one **must depart** from their own forward nature. Do you see how universal this plague is to the Christian? If even David, a man after God's own heart was so troubled that he made a

determination to depart from his disobedient nature then surely each of us is also similarly troubled.

So we depart from our own forward nature and yield unto Christ in fullness of dependency, not with a grudging and weary spirit but with a joyful one that delights in seeing how good the King of Kings is that He cares for us so deeply that He would love to share each and every moment of your life with you, even the seemingly dull and tedious ones! When you come to understand this then even these are banished from your spirit as you see that every moment is a blessing no matter the situation for the Creator God is sharing it personally with little old you!

Now we come to the second half of verse 4, "a wicked person I will not know". In the fullness of this declaration David is determining that he will not bring his heart into communion with a wicked person. It is a continuation of his assertion that he shall depart from his own disobedient nature. David is wise to understand that this heavenly desire to turn away from a forward heart is made all the harder when we bring ourselves near to godless souls.

On a personal note, my wife Donna and I struggled greatly for years to live joyfully in Christ because we still embraced an openly rebellious and defiant soul in the form of her father. He made no qualms about belittling God and flagrantly blasphemed His name to all who would hear. He was the definition of a proud and disobedient man. Donna and I were still in our early days of marriage and we had a desire to serve the Lord and grow in faith but this was always stunted and halted by something. Looking back with the eyes of God it was held back sadly by Donna's father, a wicked person such of which as David the Psalmist warns of. Her father would constantly raise issues that he knew would stir up stress and strain between us, so much so that we would become ill and overworked out of a desire to secure some means of silencing this ever accusatory voice from within the family. It led us away from Christ, from joyful dependency on His goodness and mercy and made us unyielding to His promise that He knows all the things we have need of (Matthew 6:7-8).

A wicked person when they are allowed to be near to a godly person's heart so much so that they have influence over them (the Biblical definition of 'knowing someone') is nothing less than a path away from joyful trust in Christ. So while it may seem harsh when we read the words of David on a cursory reading, when we study it carefully, we see it is a wise statement that protects the very faith of the godly heart.

Remember that Christ came to divide, not to unite (Luke 12:51-53). It is a heavy truth when first considered assuredly but that does not make it any less of a truth. However when it is considered more studiously then we see the goodness of God once more. God separates so that good is not stained with evil, so that joy is not broken with heartbreak and that life is not chained by death. If I had been but a stronger man of God those years back and led my family away from that wicked soul then I know we would've been spared much suffering that still affects us today! Yet I did not because I did not know the Scriptures enough to have it to rely upon. All I had was a nagging voice that I dismissed as I did not recognise it for who it was, the Holy Ghost seeking to lead us away from hurtful evil and towards joyful dependency on the unchanging, unending goodness of Christ Jesus. Do you see the importance of Scriptural study?! Faith is wonderful truly but it must never be blind faith, His Word is too full of wisdom and truth for faith to ever be so described. We often term it thus as a justification for our laziness of application of faith in studying the Bible. For how can we ever trust fully a God whom we do not know past a basic level? How can we be certain that He **wants** to share each hope, fear, joy, sadness etc, etc with us daily if we do not know it for ourselves. Don't take my word for it, read it for yourself! Taste and see the Lord is good and that blessed is the man that trusts in God! (Psalm 34:8).

So begin this New Year with the same determination as David, that you will depart from a proud, unyielding, resistant heart before God and that instead you will delight in relying on Him for all things. Declare that you will share all things with Him, both the great troubles and hopes of your day and the smallest and most trivial, for this is His expectancy of you. Then set about to rid yourself of those who you've wrongly allowed to be close to you who are known to be wicked souls who desire to know nothing of God. They would only be used to weaken your faith, disturb your happy dependency on Christ for all things and bring you low into doubt and confusion through reliance of self. Do not grieve the Lord so and remember that blessed is the heart that trusts in God. Amen.

By Jonathan Badger

Ancient Climate Change

'Climate Change' is the hot topic of the past few years with nations panicking about how they must all unite in a one world plan to halt the 'certain' destruction of our one planet. Anyone who is not signed up to this concept and plan is quickly accused of being a 'climate

change denier'. This accusation comes with severe consequences for those in academic and scientific circles as funding for their positions/projects is swiftly withdrawn and any well researched papers are quickly hushed up and denied widespread circulation.

Yet what if those who are so happy to accuse others of being 'climate change deniers' are actually the real climate change deniers?! Well it's not such a strange idea as you might think. Recent research conducted in Greenland has unearthed ancient DNA (wrongly asserted at being 2 million years old – DNA breaks down far too quickly for this to be possible but the base point of it being ancient DNA remains to a degree) has revealed that this frozen landscape was once a much warmer region.



Greenland hasn't always been a frozen tundra – the present is not the key to the past

Scientists have found evidence (41 samples of DNA found in clay and quartz layers buried under the arctic ice) for the existence of mastodons, lemmings, hares and geese in Greenland along with boreal forests of birch trees. Indeed scientists believe what is now the polar desert of Greenland was once 11-19 degrees Celsius warmer and therefore the perfect environment for such animal and plant life to thrive.

It would appear then according to the data, the actual tangible evidence, our one planet has experienced other far more dramatic changes in it's climate than what is being feared today. If we play devil's advocate here and note that this data is based on a 2 million year old series of samples, this means mankind was not responsible for this immense difference in world temperature (secular dating has modern man emerging about 200,000 years ago).

It is well known that our planet has experienced other fluctuations in temperature in even recent world history. The Medieval period saw an increase in temperatures which was then followed by the 'Little Ice Age' between the 13th and 18th centuries A.D. In this period it was not uncommon for the River Thames to freeze such were the harsh temperatures experienced in our own land.

However all these known facts do not fit conveniently with the modern environmental movement and it's often scientifically unsupported position that mankind is causing the world temperature to increase through it's use of fossil fuels. Now given that there was a period of global temperature increase in the Medieval age, I'm not aware of many Medieval corporations in existence that utilised fossil fuels to mass produce products and thus cause the global temperature increase seen in that point of history.

There is a strange but ever revealing movement afoot that is being used to pull the nations of the world together in a uniting of futures to save mankind from a theoretical extinction. It is this spirit of Babel that is re-emerging today that is being spread under the guise of climate change. The world is being told that to save itself and appease an angry Mother Earth (pagan pantheism of the ancients simply repackaged) it must abandon all use of fossil fuels and instead embrace renewable energies. The problem is however is that renewable energy is extremely unreliable (headline news in December over the lack of wind causing alarmingly low levels of electricity generated by off shore wind farms) and massively expensive to build and maintain. The climate goals of many of the nations of the world is bankrupting them and has left them vulnerable to rogue states for the supply of vital energy sources (see Russia, Gulf states etc).

The bankrupting of the world's developed nations however is highly desirable to the elite of the world. The World Economic Forums desires to have a Great Reset by 2030, a complete wiping out of capitalist society that has seen civilisation prosper at a rate otherwise unseen in human history. If the world's developed nations are brought to bankruptcy then it would be fertile ground at last for a new economic vision to take hold. One where one central body would have complete control so as to 'ensure such disasters never happen again'. This body would dictate the financial operation of the globe and would be the footing of a One World Government, the launching pad of the AntiChrist.

So when one looks at the dismissal of militant 'Man Made Climate Change' advocates of the evidence of our planet's temperature fluctuations over the millennia, something sinister beings to seep through the veneer of concern for humanity's welfare. It is this push for a level globe where all is set for a global union in all facets. One only has to look at increasing demands from once colonised nations for 'climate change compensation' from wealthy developed nations as another evidence of this movement.

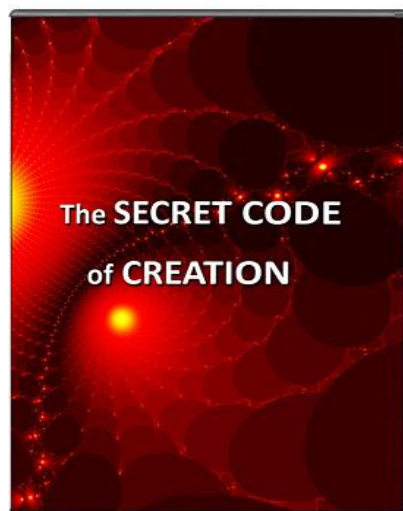
Now I am far from against aiding developing nations. It should be our desire to see other nations prosper for we are all made in the image and likeness of God. Yet through these current demands it is not a goal of bringing the developing nations up to the living standards of the developed world, it is the disturbing trend in seeing the developed world come down to living standards of the developing world. This is **harming everyone** and prospers only the elite whose climate change focused companies are profiting at staggering rates from this hysteria (just Google Al Gore's net worth and how it has dramatically increased since his *An Inconvenient Truth* 'documentary' alarmed the world nearly two decades ago).

I encourage you to use the 'sound mind' the Lord has given you to investigate all things and to see for yourself that all is not as it is portrayed in the mainstream media. The actual evidence, much like in Creation vs Evolution debates is very much on the side on the Scriptures and is our alert that steps are moving ever more progressively to the End Days. So be alert Christian Soldier and **study**. That apparently hard to understand and difficult word that has been removed from modern bible versions. I wonder why?

By Jonathan Badger

Resource Corner

The Secret Code of Creation (DVD)

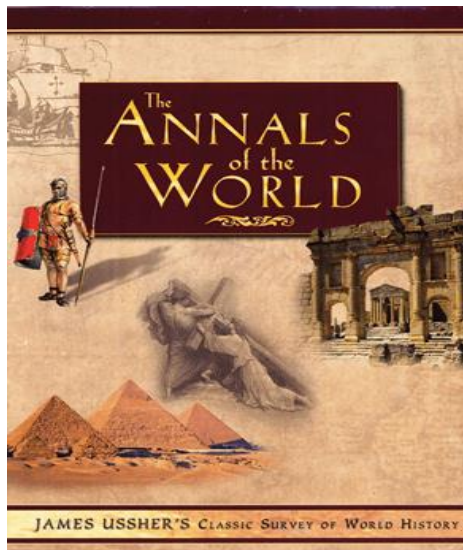


Join ICR Director of Research Dr. Jason Lisle as he provides "a little window into the mind of God" by exploring the amazingly beautiful and complex secret code that God has built into numbers.

Using fractals — types of structures that repeat infinitely on smaller and smaller scales — Dr. Lisle demonstrates that the laws of math couldn't possibly have resulted from any kind of evolution and could only have originated from God. Fractals have no reasonable explanation in the secular/evolutionary worldview, but their intricacy, complexity, and wondrous beauty reflect the infinitely complex and inexpressibly powerful mind of the Creator.

Available from Answers in Genesis

The Annals of the World

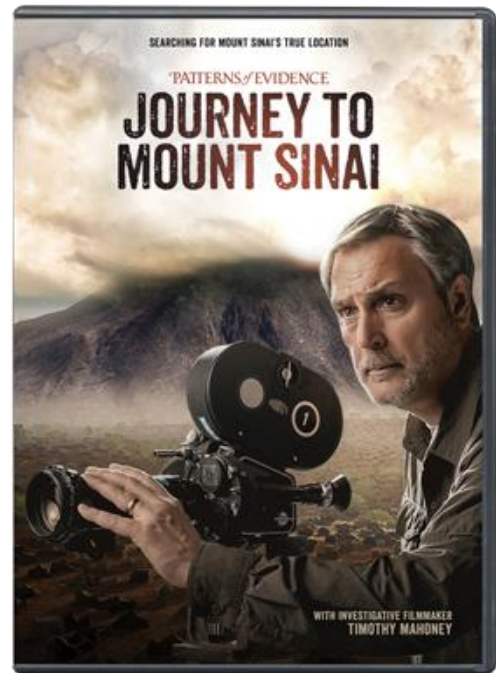


As a historical work, Ussher's 'Annals of the World' is a must-have for libraries of all sizes. Universities, public and private schools, professors, independent scholars, and pastors will find a treasure-trove of material previously unavailable. Containing many human interest stories from the original historical documents collected by Ussher, this is more than just a history book - it's a work of history.

James Ussher was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1581. He entered Trinity College at age 13 and graduated with a B.A. at age 15. He received his master's at 18 and was appointed proctor of the college. He was ordained a deacon and priest at age 20 in the Anglican church. He became Professor of Divinity at Dublin at age 26. An expert in Semitic languages, he was appointed to King James's Privy Council in Ireland in 1628. He wrote much literature, of which his Annals remains the most famous. When he died in 1656, Oliver Cromwell held a magnificent state funeral for him and had him buried in Westminster Abbey. Cromwell took great pains to make sure the writings and library of Ussher were preserved.

Available from Answers in Genesis & Amazon

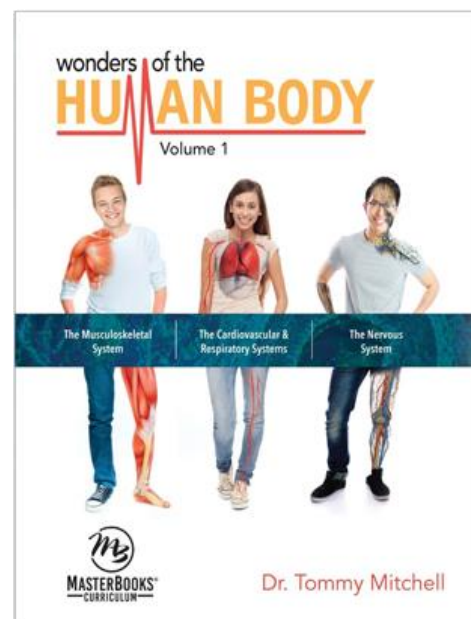
Patterns of Evidence: Journey to Mount Sinai



Mahoney uses the trusted Patterns-of-Evidence approach and the new Mount Sinai Scorecard to investigate six of the most popular locations proposed for Mount Sinai. Examining details for five major criteria in the biblical account compared to geographical and archaeological information, he sets out to pin-point the mountain's true location. *Journey to Mount Sinai* is a 2-part film series that picks up the exploration of the Exodus where the Red Sea Miracle films left off. Each film will examine three of the primary candidates.

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Wonders of the Human Body



The Wonders of the Human Body Series is an exploration of the awe-inspiring creation that is the human body. Nothing else in the universe is quite like it! Your body is delicate yet powerful, incredibly complex but at times amazingly simple. We will explore the structure, function, and regulation of the body in detail. In Volume One you will discover:

The Musculoskeletal System. The first unit opens with the building blocks of your body—the cells. Your body is built from many kinds of cells and tissues, and you will learn how they work. Even the bones and muscles that give you strength and speed depend on many types of cells.

The Cardiovascular & Respiratory Systems. The second unit covers the incredible design of the human heart, including how blood moves through an incredible network of arteries and veins and how the respiratory system allows us to get the “bad air out “ and the “good air in!”

The Nervous System. The third unit teaches you about how nerve signals are generated throughout the body, the structure of the brain and how it processes input from the body, our senses of sight, hearing, and taste, and more!

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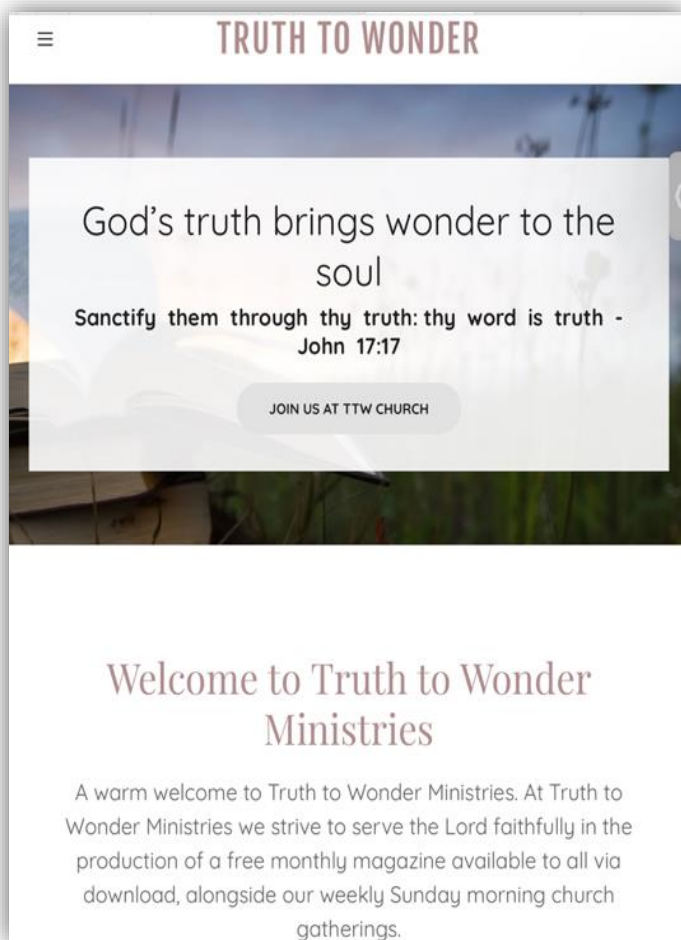
See how archaeological discoveries uphold the Bible's claim to be recording of history and not just a collection of moral teachings and virtue filled myths.

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