

That Newspaper Article About Joshua's Long Day

Ferrell Jenkins

There is an article making its round in the bulletins about how the Bible aids space flight. The article was originally credited to The Evening World, a newspaper published in Spencer, Ind. Lately it has been credited to each preceding church bulletin. Each editor has added his comment about how wonderful it is that we have "solid evidence" that the Bible is true.

Brethren, I want it clearly understood that I believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God — and this includes the miracles. I believe everything Joshua 10 records. But, this article that is going around is not true. And instead of being "wonderful proof" or "amazing confirmation," it is plainly false!

The Article

The article under consideration tells of a "Mr. Harold Hill, President of Curtis Engine Co., In Baltimore, Md., and a consultant in the space program." The rest of the article is presented as a direct quote from Mr. Hill. Mr. Hill supposedly told of some space scientists who were checking the position of the sun, moon, and planets to determine where they would be 100 and 1,000 years from now. as they began to trace backward they "found there is a day missing in space in elapsed time." A religious fellow on the team told them about Joshua's long day. The article says "they checked the computers going back into the time it was written and found it was close but not close enough!" (Emphasis mine, FJ). That statement alone should be enough to tell anyone that something about this article is wrong. Indeed! What time was it (the book of Joshua) written? If we knew when the book of Joshua was written that might well end all controversy over the date of this Bible book. And what a boon this would be in settling the problem of the date of the Conquest of Canaan.

Harry Rimmer told the same general story in The Harmony of Science and Scripture (251-82). Rimmer's book was written in 1936, so the setting

of the story about finding the "missing day" is different. Rimmer even gave the exact date of the battle — it was Tuesday, June 22. Rimmer said that "a book by Prof. C. A. Totten of Yale, written in 1890" established this point "beyond the shadow of a doubt" (28). The part of the story about the 40 minutes unaccounted for is also told in Rimmer as it is in the newspaper article we are considering. And sure enough, the 40 minutes are found in Hezekiah's sun dial.

Bernard Ramm, in The Christian View of Science and Scripture (156-61), discusses "The Long Day of Joshua" and mentions the argument made by Rimmer and others:

Second, there is the claim made by Harstad, Black (Bible and Science), and Rimmer (The Harmony of Science and Scripture) that it is common knowledge among astronomers that one full day is missing in our astronomical calculations and that Prof. Pickering of the Harvard Observatory traced it back to the time of Joshua. Maunders of Greenwich and Totten of Yale are then supposed to have taken it right back to the time of Joshua, practically to the year and day. Then Totten added to this the 10° (sic) of Ahaz' dial to round out the full day. This I have not been able to verify to my own satisfaction. (159)

Ramm also says that "Dr. Kulp has tried to check this theory at Yale and in England, and has found nothing to verify it."

I Wrote Mr. Hill

After seeing the article in a couple of bulletins I wrote Mr. Hill as follows:

I was wondering if you could give me more precise information about this lost day from the scientific records. Has there been an article on this in any scientific (or other) journal?

In a few days Mr. Hill wrote back sending three items with his letter: (1) a photo copy of a newspaper article pertaining to another matter, (2) a page from his own notebook, and (3) a copy of Voice magazine giving his "own experience in

meeting God personally a few years ago.” The page from Mr. Hill’s notebook included the same general information about “The Missing Day”. In the newspaper article from The Evening World it appeared that Mr. Hill was actively working with the space scientist who found the “missing day”. In his notebook Mr. Hill has “it was reported” without any reference. In his letter he said: “I have not been able to come up with the source of the “Missing Day” incident but when I do, I’ll sent it along” (Emphasis mine, F.J.).

It is evident that Mr. Hill was simply repeating a story he had read or been told and not one he actually knew from experience to be true. We are no more impugning his motives than we are those of the good brethren who unwittingly aided this falsity. Whether Mr. Hill elaborated upon this matter as reported in The Evening World (he did not indicate otherwise in his letter), or someone else made the elaboration is unknown to me.

The Voice magazine which Mr. Hill sent is published by the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (Jan. - Feb., 1968) and contains his personal “testimony”. He tells of being healed by Oral Roberts, receiving Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.

A Concluding Recommendation

Brethren, we need to be cautious about picking up everything that happens to appear in a newspaper. Material like this does not “confirm faith” or point to the “amazing accuracy” of the word of God; it makes those who propagate it the laughing stock of the scientific and intellectual community. Do not say this does not matter, because one of the purposes in publishing such must be to bring about the conversion of the men of science. There are many good reliable books on the general area of “science and Scripture” and we would do well to study some of the established arguments and use them.

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Subsequent Developments

After my article was published I learned the following things about the newspaper article.

Oct. 10, 1970: Article first appeared in “Mary Kay’s Kollum.” Mrs. Mary Kathryn Bryan said, “The article is a copied one of which there is no idea of its origin...”

After Dec. 13, 1969, Mrs. Bryan wrote Elam Kuykendall: “The article...is as handed to me and I do not know the origin...”

Jan. 16, 1970: Hill wrote Joe Corley that he made the speech at “the Admore, Oklahoma CFO Camp awhile ago. I do not have documentation available at this time but will forward it to you when I come across it again. So many of these things are happening these days that I cannot keep up with them all.”

Feb. 21, 1970: Gary Fiscus claimed he was the first to run the article in a bulletin. He copied it from the Spencer, Indiana, newspaper.

June 9, 1970: Hill sent me a sheet: “I did not write it but assume it was adapted from one of the many talks I have made.... I have misplaced the source information and so am unable to give you names and places but will forward them as soon as I locate them. In the mean time I can only tell you that had I not considered the source to be completely reliable, I would not have made use of this information in the first place. I am interested in facts and not fiction.”

March 25, 1970: Mrs. Bryan reprinted the article, admitting they “really started something.” In a note to me she said, “I think the column is self explanatory and needs no affirmation or confirmation under a byline.”

Sept. 11, 1970: Christianity Today exposed story under the title “Missing Day or Missing Data?”

1998: The article is being distributed via Email.

Several photos of the Valley of Aijalon are available at our travel blog: ferrelljenkins.blog. Just type Aijalon in the Search Box.