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THE PHARAOH OF THE EXODUS

Egyptology as a science is only about 200 years old. Napoleon and his army were accompanied to Egypt by a cadre of scientists. It was then that the Rosetta Stone (the actual stone, not the language learning program) was discovered. Egyptology, though, can only really be considered a science beginning with the translation of that stone in 1822. One hundred years later, Howard Carter made the greatest archaeological find in history when he uncovered the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun Nebkheprure in 1922. Since that time little of note outside the scientific community has been unearthed. In the early years of the science, the predominant motivating factor was to prove the Bible correct. That goal was never really accomplished, although some proposed proofs that later did not stand scrutiny.

One of the first assumptions in Egyptology was that the pyramids were the granaries of Joseph. It wasn't long, however, before it was discovered that they were much older, and served as tombs. It is interesting to contemplate, as did Karl Richard Lepsius, the great German Egyptologist, that "when Abraham came to Egypt for the first time, he saw these very Pyramids, which had been already built man centuries before." (That visit, recorded in Genesis 12, dates about as far before Jesus was born as we now live.)

The big question, though, was always, "Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?" There have been two dates proposed. If you have watched Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, and who hasn't, then you are familiar with the later date. In that movie, and for years the commonly accepted date, the exodus occurs during the reign of Rameses II (The Great). That would put it at about 1250 BC. The problem with that date is that it falls too late for the judges to fit between it and King Saul. That would, in fact, put the exodus at about the time of the judge Deborah, a temporal impossibility. There is no evidence that Rameses was the pharaoh at the time of the Exodus other than the coincidence that one of the store cities built by the Israelites bore the same name.

Solomon began to build the Temple "in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were

come out of the land of Egypt." It can easily be established that Solomon began building the Temple about 966 BC. That would put the date of the exodus about 1446. This is 225 years earlier than the reign of Rameses II. For those familiar with the commonly accepted timeline of the pharaohs, this is shortly after Queen Hatshepsut, one of the great female pharaohs. (Could she be the daughter of pharaoh that brought up Moses?) The pharaoh of the exodus would then be Tuthmoses III, "the Napoleon of Egypt." This would be about 112 years before Tutankhamun. There has been found, however, no Egyptian evidence of the Israelite captivity or Exodus.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus is not the only one mentioned in the Bible. Some we cannot identify. There are a couple we can. Solomon married a daughter of Pharaoh. (1 Kings 3:1) This would be Pharaoh Psusennes II, whom almost nobody has heard about. Later King Jehoiakim paid a pharaoh to help defend Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:35) This would be Pharaoh Neco or Nekau II, whose dealings with Israel are well documented. He is most famous in history for the battle of Carchemish, which is also mentioned in 2 Chronicles 35:20.

Setting out to prove the Bible may be a noble goal. The history of Egyptology shows that it may not be as easy as one thinks. The more logical path may be that of archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. He used the text of the *Iliad* to find Troy. The logical path, then, may be the more recent one of taking the Bible by faith, and then using it to find its own proofs, as some have in recent years. The hard part to some is the most essential part, believing that the Bible is true. And if you believe it to be true, you don't need to dig in the sand to prove it.

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IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING

The United States is one of only a few countries in the world that allow television advertising of prescription products. One wonders how much lower prescription prices might be if the pharmaceutical companies did not spend so much on advertising to the general public, who don't even make their drug decisions. The commercials have phrases like, "Ask your doctor if this product is right for you." Translation: you can't trust your doctor to make treatment decisions, but you can trust a television ad. Then there come the mandatory list of possible side effects, including death. Translation: if you take our medication to control bleeding, one of the side effects may be excessive blood loss. Then finally the kicker. "Do not take if you are allergic to this medication or its constituent products." If it is a one-time medication, how are you supposed to know if you are allergic? If it is a maintenance medication, it should be obvious not to take it if you are allergic. That is akin to warning not to let children play with sharp knives. Some things should be obvious. There are some things in

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the Bible that should be equally obvious, but we have to tell other people anyway.

God is

When Moses wrote the words, "In the beginning, God..." he knew that the existence of God was one of those obvious things that didn't need addition explanation. He takes it as a given, like not taking medications to which you are allergic. He had seen God, and needed no further proof. Even when he argued with God, he said the people of Israel would take his existence for granted.

And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. (Ex 4:1)

It wasn't a question of who God was. It was a question of whether Moses had actually been commissioned by Him.

The question of the existence of God is not without proofs, however. David said the proof was ever before us, so that the existence of God should be obvious.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. (Ps 19:1-3)

Look around. What do you see? You see God. Unless you choose not to see him. Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first man to survive a launch into space, was falsely credited with saying that he "didn't see God up there." (The words were actually Nikita Khrushchev's, but the party line felt it would sound better to have come from the man who was actually up there.) In spite of the official Communist Party line, Gagarin, a baptized Orthodox Christian, was quoted as saying, "An astronaut cannot be suspended in space and not have God in his mind and his heart." He felt it impossible not to believe what the Psalmist had said.

Paul spends the first chapter of his letter to the Romans showing how hard it is not to believe in God, and the results of unbelief. Just like saying not to take a medication to which you are allergic, he says "God is" is obvious. When they deny the obvious they might as well take a medication to which they are allergic, and suffer the reaction thereto.

The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

The writer of Hebrews reaffirms this. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb 11:6)

Jesus is the Son of God

It is a popular thing to assert today that Jesus never explicitly said he was the Son of God. This, despite the priests at the cross mocking him by saying, "he said, I am the Son of God." (Matt 27:43) While they didn't believe it, they admitted he said it.

When did he explicitly say that he was the Son of God? When he was asked directly if he was.

Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. (Mk 14:61-62)

There are so many proofs that even if he did not say it, it goes without saying. From the announcement to Mary before his birth to the ascension into heaven after the crucifixion, Jesus's whole life was proof of who he was.

The miracles proved it. When Jesus stilled the storm after Peter walked on water, those in the boat confessed, “Thou art the Son of God.” (Matt 14:33) When he told Nathanael that he saw him under a fig tree, Nathanael said the same thing. After he healed a man born blind, the man believed, and worshipped. (Jn 9)

John recorded miracles in his book that are not recorded in the other gospels (and some that are). His thesis statement, which comes near the end of the book is that Jesus is the Son of God.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (Jn 20:30-31)

Interestingly, there is a whole class of beings that didn’t need to be told, or need the miracles, to know that Jesus was God’s son. All that the demons needed was to see him and they confessed belief in who he was.

Jesus met two demon-possessed men who immediately asked, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?” (Matt 8:28-29) “And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.” (Mk 3:11)

And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. (Lk 4:41)

The idea that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah is not new. Even in the first century the Gnostics denied that Jesus was the Son of God come in the flesh. The entire first letter of John was written to counter that belief. He even coined a word to describe those people.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 Jn 4:3)

There is much misunderstanding today about who John called “antichrist.” It is really very simple. Those who don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh fit the definition of that term. It is not some future person who will lead the world into opposition to Christ. It is anyone who needs to be told not to take the medicine if they are allergic; those who don’t believe that which goes without saying.

Sin is sin

Those who prefer to sin use all sorts of excuses to say sin is not sin. It is a disease. It is natural. It doesn’t hurt anybody else. “It can’t be wrong if it feels so right,” to quote the most popular song of the 1970s. The excuses are almost as varied as the people who use them. They all ignore the most obvious, that sin is, by definition, sin.

Some sins are so obvious one wonders why God would have to repeat that they are sin. The average person does not need to be told that it is wrong to murder another person. Parents have been teaching children for about as long as there have been siblings that it is wrong to take things from someone else. While everyone lies, almost everyone knows that it is wrong to do so. On crime dramas even children know not to lie when giving testimony. And yet, these are among the things God had to remind the Israelite nation when he gave them the Ten Commandments.

Throughout the Bible there are lists of things that God considers sin. Half the book of Exodus and much of Leviticus is concerned with defining sin. Likewise Deuteronomy.

Paul saw fit to list sins, even though he thought

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that they were obvious. Nevertheless, he felt he had to remind his readers that sin is sin.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

Paul used a different, but overlapping list when writing the Corinthians. “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor those who commit homosexual acts, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor 6:9-10) And again he gives a list to Timothy.

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that commit homosexual acts, for slavers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (1 Tim 1:9-10)

Many of these things the average person would say were too obvious to have to repeat. Paul wanted to make sure people knew that sin was sin because, “the wages of sin is death.” (Rom 6:23) Death is a side effect of sin. Don’t take sin if you are allergic to it, and you are.

MISUSING THE REVELATION

We are in the middle of a pandemic. Several companies have offered vaccines as a way out of the pandemic. And yet there are people who oppose taking the vaccine. Opposing vaccines, like opposing eating meat, is a personal choice. That is their right. Some, however, go beyond simply opposing the vaccine for personal reasons and try to manufacture a biblical justification for not taking it. Some try to find a biblical justification, and in so doing try to shame those who choose to take the vaccine. In so doing they step over the line established in Romans 14:3. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him."

One justification equates taking the vaccine with Israel's worship of the golden calf in Exodus 32. The argument goes something like this. In 1796, Edward Jenner proved that people inoculated with cowpox pus were rendered permanently immune to the more virulent smallpox. Because he used cowpox, he proposed that the process be called vaccination (from vaca:cow). Louis Pasteur proposed that the term be used for any inoculation to prevent a disease. Those seeking a biblical objection to the process point out that the term means "from the cow," and point to the golden calf. They argue that the coincidence of the word cow and the idol must mean that vaccination is idolatry.

That argument stretches credibility. There are many other terms using the word cow to which they do not object. In Spanish-speaking countries one who herds cattle is often called a vaquero, which in English is cowboy. Almost nobody accuses cowboys of idolatry, except maybe idolizing the money they made from their profession.

Another argument calls mass vaccination "the

mark of the beast." (Rev 13:16-18) Out of a fear that anything the government mandates or requests of everyone must be part of "the New World Order," mass vaccination must be the mark of the beast. It is a mark you receive in your right (or left) arm. Although it is not required by the government, it is highly recommended.

There is nothing wrong with basing one's objections on government interference or "mind control." The problem comes when they use the Revelation to justify their objection. Why is that?

This argument assumes, in spite of what the book itself says, that the prophecies of the Revelation are yet to come true in our time. If that were the case, then the book has had no meaning for almost two millennia. People have been trying to interpret the symbols of the Revelation based on their own time and experience ever since it was written. They have been consistently wrong. What makes anybody think that our time any more likely to be the right time than every other time? Why was the year 1900 or 2000 any more likely to be the time than 1000 or 1500?

More importantly, the book itself gives the time for its fulfillment. Four times it says that the events it talks about are soon to come to pass (Rev 1:1; 22:6) or "at hand" (Rev 1:3; 22:10). If a mother asked her child to take out the trash and the reply was "I'll do it soon," she would not expect to wait a week for the trash to be taken out. Likewise, if the first century readers of John's Revelation were told the events would happen soon, they would not expect to have to wait 2,000 years. It is unclear what these people think vaccines have to do with Nero Caesar.

Every prediction of the Revelation has been fulfilled. Notwithstanding, the message of the book of the Revelation that is for everyone is clear. The saints will win. There is no need to read into it any more than that.

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