

Think Believe

Discover Creation...Worship the Creator

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The Manger

by Richard Stepanek

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Luke 2:8,10-12

I have read the narrative many times, and I have often wondered, of all the shepherds in Israel, why did the angels come to these shepherds? What was so special about them? The angels announced they would find the newborn babe in Bethlehem lying in a manger. There must have been many mangers in Bethlehem. How would they know which one? Neither the shepherds nor the angels had GPS to give them directions to the manger. In fact, the shepherds did not even ask for directions! After the angels left, the shepherds went in haste to the manger and found the Christ child. Apparently, the shepherds knew right where to go. This must have been a special manger which the shepherds were very familiar with.

After doing some research, I was amazed by what I discovered. These shepherds were not ordinary

shepherds, and the sheep were not ordinary sheep. It turns out that the sacrificial lambs were raised in the fields of Bethlehem. These shepherds were specially trained to raise thousands of unblemished lambs to be sacrificed in the temple for the sins of Israel.

When it was time for the ewes to give birth, they were brought to the “Tower of the Flock.” It was a special tower used to watch over the flock during this crucial time. The lower level of the tower was strictly maintained as a ceremonially clean place used for birthing. Newborn lambs were wrapped in swaddling clothes for protection and laid in the manger until they were calm and could be inspected to see if they were “without spot or blemish.” This area would be very familiar to the shepherds. Therefore, they would not need directions to this unique manger; they knew very well where it was.

Being a direct descendant of David, Joseph would likely have had some awareness of the “Tower of the Flock.”

**Let us now
go even unto
Bethlehem,
and see...**

So, when there was no room in the inn for Mary and Joseph, this would have been the perfect place to take Mary to deliver the child – a clean protected area along with a crib or manger designed for newborns. In Micah 4:8 we see that Jesus is connected to the “Tower of the Flock”: “And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the

kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.”

Likely, these shepherds were familiar with the Scriptures – that Genesis told how death entered the world through Adam’s sin, how Adam and Eve had attempted to cover their sin with fig leaves, and how God provided coats of animal skins for them through the shedding of innocent blood, pointing to the ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

It seems doubtful that Joseph would take Mary to deliver the baby Jesus in an unclean place but, instead, to the place where the sacrificial “lambs of God” were born. These shepherds realized that Jesus Christ is the true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! (John 1:29) **AOI**

*From all of us at AOI to all
of you: Have a very happy
Thanksgiving and
Christ-centered Christmas.*



The Inn – What Inn? *by Dave Nutting*



We frequently get the idea that the manger where Jesus was placed was in some kind of barn or cave where all kinds of animals hung out. That comes from tradition, but not necessarily from Scripture.

We also get the idea that Joseph knocked on doors all over Bethlehem looking for a suitable room. However; according to a December 22, 2021 web post by Emmaus Road Ministries, the inn where Joseph and Mary sought lodging was likely not just any



inn, but a specific one known as Chimham's Inn. The post traces this inn all the way back to Jacob (likely its original builder) at a place close to where his beloved wife Rachel was buried, beyond the Tower of Edar (Tower of the "Flocks"). The author indicates that the house was later passed on to Boaz and Ruth, then down to King David. King David later wished to bless

Barzillai the Gileadite for coming to the aid of David and his men. However, David and the elderly Barzillai agreed to confer

that blessing onto Barzillai's youngest son, Chimham. We find out later, the house of Chimham ends up becoming a popular stopover place. See Jeremiah 41:17 and 2 Samuel 19:37-38.

So, is this the guest house (inn) that had no room for Joseph and Mary? Is this where the Tower of the Flock is also located stemming clear back prior to Jacob's dwelling there? We don't know for sure. While Bible commentators and scholars differ on this subject, it is certainly food for thought. For more information, see: <https://emmausroadministries.international/2021/12/22/chimhams-inn-christmas-series-part-3-of-7/> AOI

New Devotional: Without Excuse: The Compelling Evidence for Creation

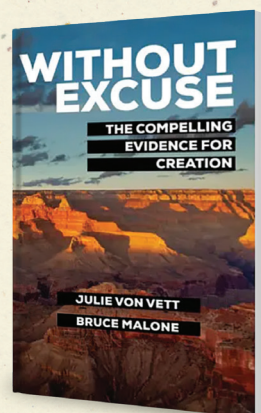
Review by Dave Nutting

In past issues of **Think & Believe**, we highlighted the daily creation devotional books, **Inspired Evidence** and **Have You Considered** by Julie Von Vett and Bruce Malone. Our readers have enjoyed them immensely! Many reordered multiple copies to give as gifts. (Remember, Christmas is coming!) Now, a third creation devotional in this series by these authors is available!

Without Excuse covers 365 additional evidences for creation and for our awesome Creator from various sciences of biology, geology, botany, genetics, anatomy, history, microbiology, and design. Also included with

each day's topic is an appropriate Bible verse.

This beautifully illustrated **color** devotional is technically accurate, indexed, referenced, **and easy to understand for young and old!** Many readers do one devotional per day, while others find the evidence so fascinating, they read the whole book right away.



You can do your Christmas shopping right now. This would make a great gift or use it yourself to provide 365 devotional gifts for your own family! (Hardback, full-color, 465 glossy, 5.5" x 8.3" pages) Remember: Your purchase from AOI helps us spread the creation message to your family and others! **\$15 + S/H** AOI

2022 Staff Notes/Highlights from Speaking Teams

Dave and Mary Jo Nutting:

During our seminars, we like to see eyes light up when we expose the issues of evolution and present a positive case for Creation. However, we also thrive on the relationships fostered by longer-term camps and tours. This note was from one of the participants from our Yellowstone tour. ***“Thank you again so much! Your encouragement, listening ear, attention (and patience) with our kids, your courage and passion to share truth loudly and publicly, and your prayers for both our family and staff...mean more than I can even express. You are a tremendous blessing to us!”*** -SA



Does this note give you a clue as to why Mary Jo and I love camps and tours? They allow us to come alongside the participants, spend quality time with them, and deepen relationships with longer-term friends.

Lanny and Marilyn Johnson:

A college-aged counselor at a Bible camp shared that he had gone to this camp when he was in middle school. ***“The things I learned from your creation teachings that summer helped me get through the evolutionary dogma I was taught in public school and the beginning year of college. You taught me to become a critical thinker by asking, ‘What’s the Evidence?’ Thanks so much for your ministry.”***



While it was a rough summer with COVID, we saw His protection over the many miles of travel. He got us through

our illnesses and trials and gave us the strength we needed to do our ministry. In fact, of the hundreds of youth and adults we shared the gospel with, 50 responded to the message of salvation! Oh, what a glorious God we serve! We cannot thank our supporters and prayer warriors enough for standing by us during challenging times! Only through our team partners can we take the truth of Creation and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.”

Rich and Sue Stepanek:

2022 has been another busy year! We are thankful for good health and the many ministry opportunities the Lord continues to provide. There are several churches in Colorado that currently do not have pastors,



so Rich has spent about 18 weeks filling the pulpit and sharing the Genesis message with these congregations. In addition to conducting seminar trips to FL, ID, WA, NE, and MN, Rich conducted a ZOOM class with a pastor/professor in a foreign country. Along with teaching in the area, we have traveled to homeschool conferences in Colorado and Arizona, and attended the HSLDA homeschool leadership conference in St. Louis, MO. These are great opportunities to assist in grounding families in the Word of God! It is always a great encouragement to hear people say, ***“The information***

in the seminar answered so many questions that I have had for years!” Your partnership with us continues to impact the world for Christ!

Scott Mauser:

One highlight again this year was the ability to teach in our local public high schools along with repeat invitations to speak to a large Best Practices Ministry conference. This year, I taught on catastrophic flood geology where one of my former pastors told me that he was impacted enough by the presentation to consider more study and thought on this subject. Another highlight was taking my middle school worldviews class to interact with a public high school group.



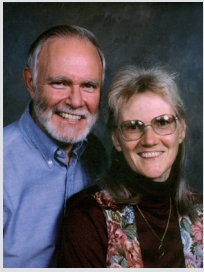
Brian and Amy Mariani:

This year we had fun outside in God’s amazing creation! We really enjoyed a number of opportunities to go with students from our training week and field trips to witness to others even within some of the National Parks. One night, I was leading a group to go fossil hunting, star gazing, and camping out. Amazingly, I was able to run my projector from our battery box to do an astronomy presentation in the middle of the desert as we watched for shooting stars and got a lightning show on the horizon! Join us on a field trip sometime and let’s reach out to those around us with God’s truths!! **AOI**



Director's Column: Building Update

by Dave Nutting



It was a real highlight this year to see the completion of AOI's Yellowstone National Park App for Android


and Apple smart phones. It was even more satisfying to test it out when we were doing the in-person Yellowstone tour in August and September. It worked beautifully.

Approaching a site by car or on foot, the GPS-activated voice automatically came on at just the right moment to give details regarding its significance.

Everyone who has tried the app has been really impressed with how comprehensive it is.


This creation tour app was a huge project! Thanks to our App

Development Team - fabulous photography, details of geology, biology, fauna, flora, facilities, visitor centers, gift shops, and even ice cream venues were included! It also was fun to work alongside KJOL Christian Radio. Their announcers blessed us greatly with professional recordings and exceptional audio production for our written narratives!

While it's best to join our live, in-person creation tour of Yellowstone, (Aug. 25-29 and Sep. 1-5) where you can really experience this amazing place, you can still be part of the tour if you're sitting at home in your arm chair. Download this amazing Creation tour app at DiscoverCreation.org for **Free!** (Donations are certainly needed and appreciated.) 

Thank You.



We are so thankful to all who are a part of AOI's support team. Even during an election year, with hurricanes, inflation, etc., you have remained faithful. Yes, this has been a tough year financially, especially since we began converting our unrented office space to apartments intended to house students who are part of our discipleship program. Do we still need donations? The answer is an emphatic YES! Donations are needed not only for the building project, but to finish the year in the black. That is sooooo necessary for a strong base as we enter another year of fruitful creation ministry. 

Costa Rica Creation Tour March 5-14, 2023

Please call us ASAP to let us know your interest!

For more information visit: www.discovercreation.org/camps-tours/costa-rica-creation-adventure/



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