

The Star of Bethlehem Review

This DVD presentation includes a marvel of animation and provides a glimpse into the immensity and precision of the universe, which God created in six days, thereby giving testimony to God's immeasurable power and wisdom.

However, there were a few matters that Rick Larson, the researcher and developer of the theory presented, did not get right and which, in my estimation, undermines the credibility of the whole presentation.

Using his computer reconstruction of the unfolding of the universe, he works backward in time (assuming a linear progression of time) and establishes that Jesus was crucified on Friday; therefore, since his computer says so, there is no disputing that it took place on Friday. Unfortunately for Larson, it does not take an astronomer to demonstrate that this is a factual error; a careful reading of the Scriptures confirm, without a doubt, that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday – despite the traditions we have received from the Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus said, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). Hank Hanegraaff, who falls into the same pit of error as Larson, has declared, “In Matthew 12:40 Jesus prophesies that He would be dead ‘three days and three nights.’ The fact of the matter is he was dead for only two nights and one full day.”¹ Both Larson and Hanegraaff are discrediting the words of Jesus, the Creator of the universe and time (Colossians 1:16), and, in effect, are saying that Jesus lied; as the Creator of time, if Jesus meant to say two nights and one day, wouldn’t it be reasonable to think that that’s what He would have said?

As already noted, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday afternoon as the Passover sacrifice for all of mankind. Thursday was a holy day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31; Leviticus 23:5-7), and was kept like unto the Sabbath. Jesus then rose at the end of the seventh-day Sabbath (6:00PM Saturday in our time – days were counted from sunset to sunset) which means He was buried three days and three nights, just as He said. For a more detailed look at this, see the ***Chart*** of the days around the crucifixion, which I have developed, including the Bible references to support the chart.

Further research into Larson’s production makes it clear that his stellar calculations for Jesus’ crucifixion would not work for any other day than Friday – therefore, this means that his calculations are flawed and his whole production is therefore suspect. He takes the dangerous position of negating the Scriptural text in favor of his computer calculations; if he’d spent as much time reading the Scriptures surrounding this time as he did developing his computer production, he would have realized the error.

He also calculates when the wise men would have come to Bethlehem, and declares that they arrived December 25th with their gifts for the Lord. Based on what I’ve already said, I would say he’s probably off considerably – although he provides creative “evidence” for celebrating this

¹ www.equip.org, “Three Days and Three Nights”

day with the giving of gifts. However, there is an additional reason why I believe he is mistaken. December 25 was the most holy day in the pagan Roman calendar – it was the day when they celebrated the birth of Mithras, the god of light (the day is celebrated within many ancient cultures as they seek to honor their version of the sun god and bring him back for another year). Jeremiah declares, “Learn not the way of the heathen ...” (Jeremiah 10:2). However, the Roman Catholic Church, in its formative years, had no qualms about taking these pagan celebrations, applying a thin veneer of Christianity and incorporating them into their own traditions. Therefore, I would find it a stretch to say that the wise men of Matthew 2 arrived to worship the Lord on December 25th – as a matter of fact, I would say God would have ensured it would have been any day but December 25th.

In all fairness, Larson made it abundantly clear that he is not an astronomer. As I researched Larson’s findings, I discovered some interesting comments. As early as 2003 (years before he produced this DVD), he was told that his presentation contained errors – not entirely unexpected for someone who is not an experienced astronomer.² However, the indications are that the errors were never corrected, and remain in his present production. Larson placed the “star” of the eastern magi in the constellations Leo (which he says speaks of Judah – the tribe from which Jesus came) and Virgo (for the virgin Mary). However, Mike Molnar, an astronomer with many years experience, places this “star” in the constellation Aries (for the Jews); Molnar is the one Larson was referred to for correction.³

Further investigation into Larson indicates that his aspiration for this presentation is that it will be a catalyst for unification within Christianity, and he speaks of drawing people of diverse faiths together. When unity comes at the cost of the integrity of Scripture, you can rest assured that God is not pleased; this is simply another case of ecumenical unity – a unity that is sweeping the world, but God is not in it. Anything that departs from the teachings of Scripture is to be avoided (Romans 16:17); and I fear that Larson has sidelined the Biblical text in favor of his computer-generated calculations for the universe.

As remarkable as his virtual graphics might be, we are not to be so easily impressed when the Word of God has been broken. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89); “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). May we be discerning in what we view and how we view it; we live in a day when impressive graphic presentations are everywhere – it is critical that the Word of God be our Standard in all things!

² <http://www.physics.smu.edu/pseudo/BethlehemStar/>

³ <http://www.eclipse.net/~molnar/>; <http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/star-of-bethlehem.shtml>