

# Evangelicals and Crackpot Science

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**ABSTRACT:** Because of the tension which has developed between the scientific and the evangelical communities in the past century and a half, Bible believers are often (rightly or wrongly) suspicious of the discoveries and theorizing of modern science. This has led to a rather widespread attraction to theories viewed as crackpot by scientists and other educated people. Some examples are discussed and strategies proposed to protect Christians from looking unnecessarily foolish before the watching world.

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**(The following is only a portion of this article from ARN)**

## **Astronomical Confirmation of Joshua's Long Day**

- 547 Eugene W. Faulstich. *Moses the Astronomer and Historian Par Excellence*. Rossie, IA: Chronology-History Research Institute, n.d.
- 755 Harold Hill. *How to Live Like a King's Kid*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, c1974.
- 1403 Harry Rimmer. *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936.
- 1623 Charles A. L. Totten. *Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz*. Merrimac, MA: Destiny, c1968 (orig. 1890).

Something very striking happened in the conquest of Canaan, when God answered Joshua's prayer and defeated Israel's enemies at Gibeon (Joshua 10). The traditional understanding, reflected in most translations and commentaries, is that God caused the sun and moon to stand still or (equivalently) the earth to stop rotating. Some evangelicals, recognizing an uncertainty in the meaning of the Hebrew verb employed and feeling God may have used a more economical miracle than this, have made other suggestions.<sup>9</sup> I personally see no reason why God could not have chosen to stop the earth, but it is certainly not unorthodox to investigate whether this is what the text really says.

Claims that the lengthened day has been confirmed by astronomical observations, however, appear to be hoaxes.<sup>10</sup> Hill's story -- reprinted in newspapers throughout the US in the 1970s -- is that computers at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD detected a missing day in past time, and that 23 hours and 20 minutes of it were found at Joshua's time, and the other 40 minutes when the sun went backward 10 degrees in Isaiah's day. NASA denies any such discovery. Who is right?

To detect such a "missing day" one would have to have two sets of information to compare, one of which would be missing a day found in the other. These sets would presumably be historical information on the one hand and astronomical extrapolation on the other. If, for instance, we knew the exact date, time and place by historical records of some eclipse of the sun before the time of Joshua, and then by calculating back from the

present, we found that the eclipse "should" have taken place exactly one day earlier than the historical report says, we would have such a day missing. However, the earliest report of a reasonably datable eclipse known (as of 1970) comes in 1217 BC, after Joshua' s time. In any case, we can rarely date such events to the exact day in ancient times, much less to a few minutes. There appears to be no way for us to detect the sort of discrepancy Hill alleges.

A very similar story is told by Rimmer, who says an astronomer friend of Prof. C. A. Totten found the same two missing times by (hand) calculations late in the last century. The Totten book Rimmer mentions, however, has no such story, but merely Totten' s own calculations. Totten, though, finds his missing day by accepting the date of creation proposed by Jabez B. Dimbleby of the British Chronological Association (September 22, 4000 BC), and finding that this was a Monday instead of the Sunday expected from his reading of Scripture, so one day must be missing from past time. He then assigns 40 minutes of this (= 10 degrees of sun movement) to Isaiah' s time and the rest to Joshua' s. No independent confirmation here!