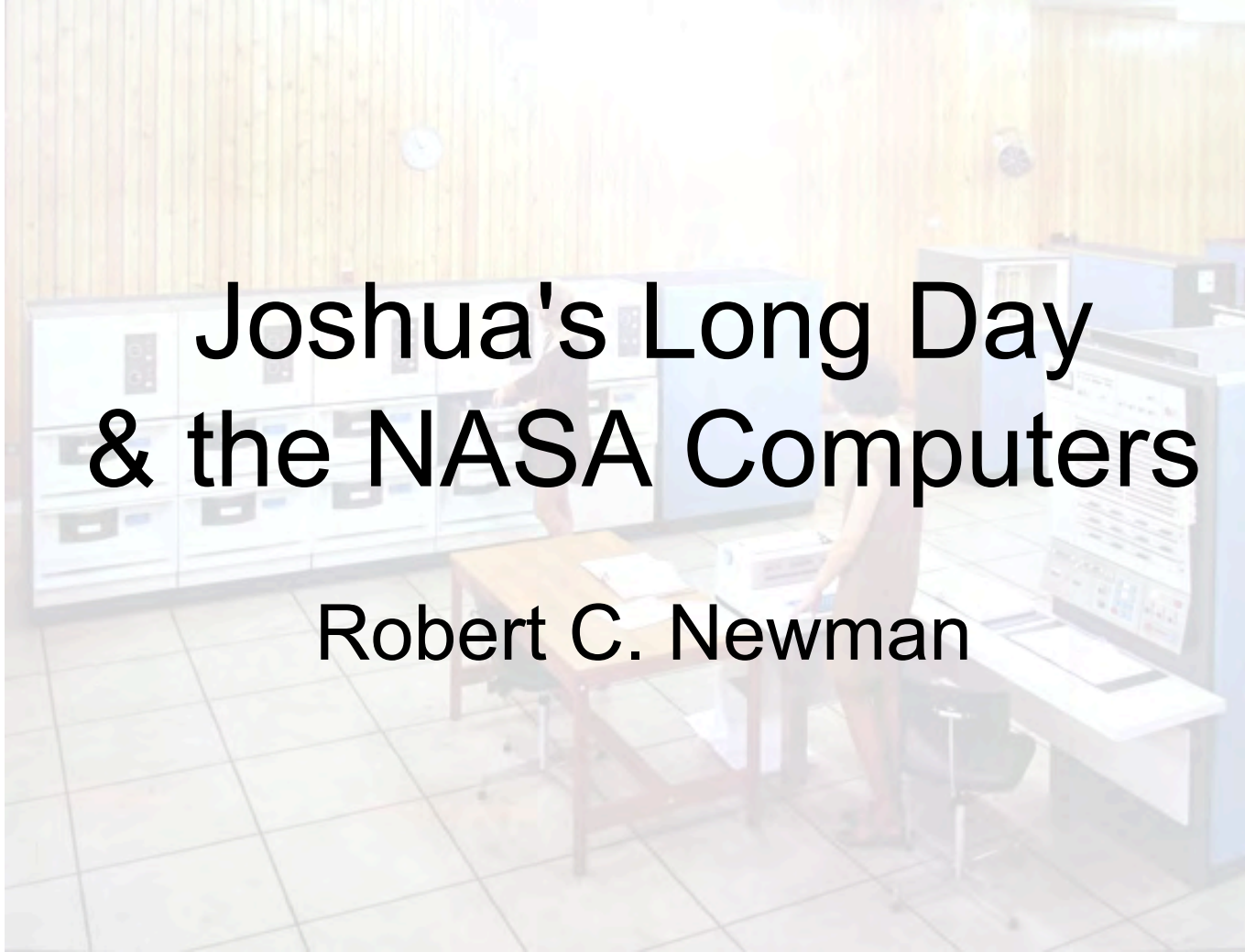


Joshua's Long Day & the NASA Computers

Robert C. Newman



The Story

- Since about 1970, various versions of the following account have appeared in newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

Did you know that the space program is busy proving that what has been called 'myth' in the Bible is true? Mr. Harold Hill, president of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore, MD, and a consultant in the space program related the following development: "I think one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened recently to our astronauts and space scientists at Greenbelt, MD. They were checking the position of sun, moon and planets out in space where they would be 100 years and 1000 years from now.

The Story

"We have to know this so we don't send a satellite up and have it bump into something later on in its orbits. We have to lay out the orbit in terms of the life of the satellite, and where the planets will be so the whole thing will not bog down! They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant that there was something wrong, either in the 'info' fed into it, or with the results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out and they said 'It's perfect.' The IBM head of operations said 'What's wrong?' 'Well, we have found that there is a day missing in space in elapsed time.' They scratched their heads and tore their hair. There was no answer.

The Story

"One religious fellow in the team said, 'You know, one time I was in Sunday School and they talked about the sun standing still.' They didn't believe him, but they didn't have any other answer so they said, 'Show us.' So he got a Bible and went back to the book of Joshua where they found a pretty ridiculous statement for anybody who has 'common sense.' There they found the Lord saying to Joshua, 'Fear them not; I have delivered them into your hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.' Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and, if darkness fell, they would overpower him. So Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still! That's right! 'The sun stood still and the moon stayed ... and hasted not to go down a whole day!'

The Story

"Well, they checked the computers, going back into the time it was written and found it was close but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes – not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it said 'about (approximately) a day.' These little words in the Bible are important. But they were still in trouble because, if you cannot account for 40 minutes, you'll be in trouble 1000 years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits. Well, this religious fellow also remembered somewhere in the Bible it had said the sun went backwards. The spacemen told him he was out of his mind.

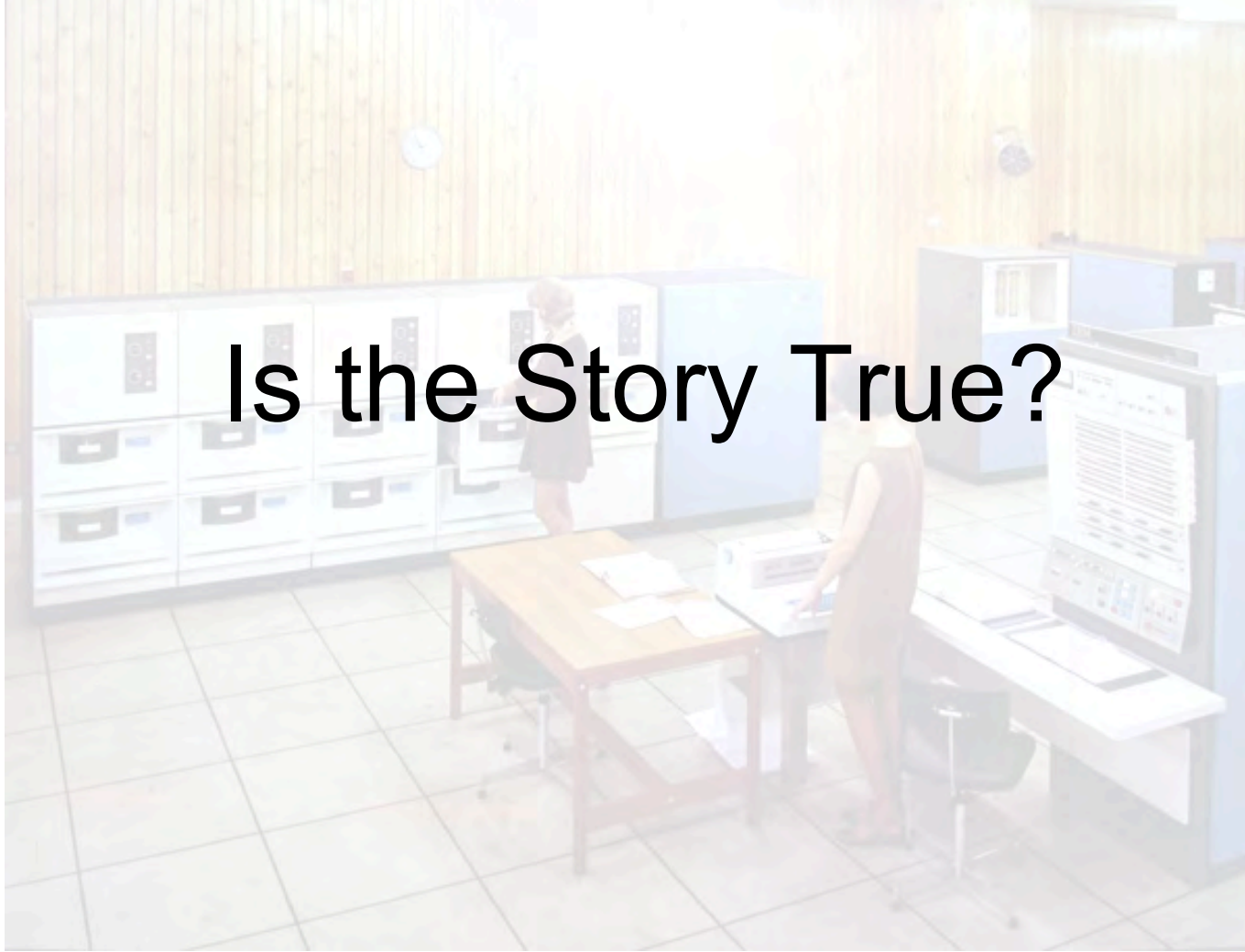
The Story

"But they got out the Book and they read these words in 2 Kings 20: Hezekiah, on his death-bed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah, who told him that he was going to die. Hezekiah did not believe him and asked for a sign as proof. Isaiah said, 'Do you want the sun to go ahead ten degrees?' Hezekiah said 'It is nothing for the sun to go ahead ten degrees, but let the shadow return backwards ten degrees.' Isaiah spoke to the Lord and the Lord brought the shadow ten degrees backward! Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes! 23 hours and 20 minutes in Joshua, plus 40 minutes in 2 Kings make the missing day in the universe." Isn't that amazing! Our God is rubbing their noses in his TRUTH. That's right.

The Story

This story was later published by Harold Hill himself in his book, *How to Live Like a King's Kid*.





Is the Story True?

Is It True?

- Naturally many Christians are excited about this story, but others are asking, 'Is it true?'
- Before we try to do some historical sleuthing on the story itself, let's look at the science.
- How might a computer detect a day missing from past time?

Finding a Missing Day

- For a computer to detect a missing day, it needs to have two sets of information which clash:
 - A calculation of where the sun, moon and/or planets ought to be at some specific time in the past; this is something a computer can do.
 - An observation of where they actually were; this is something only ancient observers could do.
- Thus we need some such observations both from before Joshua's time, and between Joshua's & Hezekiah's time.

Finding a Missing Day

- Joshua's time is not later than 1250 BC; many conservative Bible scholars put it back around 1400 BC.
- Hezekiah's time is about 700 BC.
- So we need some observations (from before 1400-1250 BC and between 1250-700 BC) of astronomical phenomena that are accurate to a few minutes in order to detect a 23 hour, 20 minute discrepancy in one place and a 40 minute discrepancy in another.

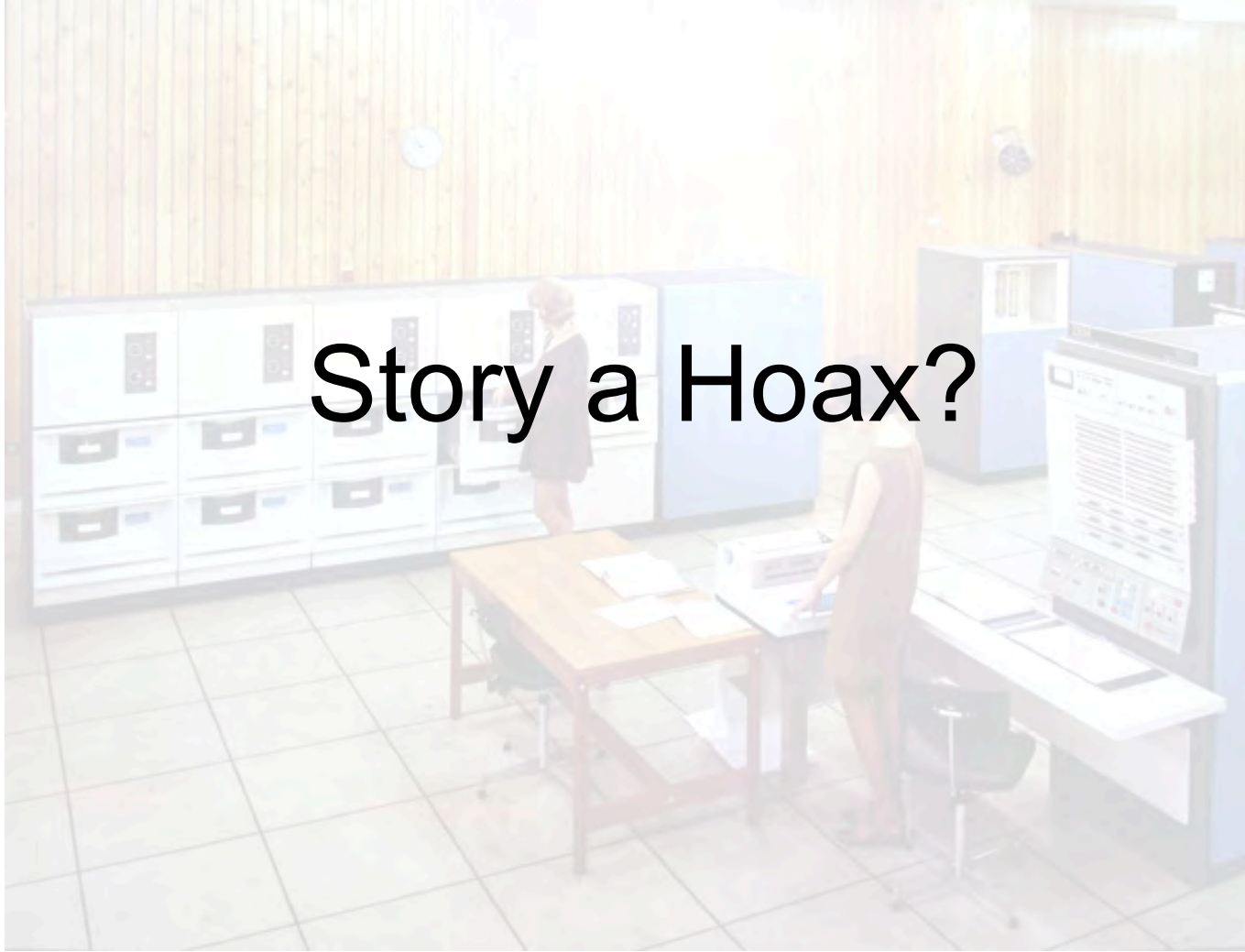
Finding a Missing Day

- Observations which could produce such accuracy (and be recorded in antiquity) are eclipses of the sun.
- Eclipses are total only along narrow paths and only last a few minutes in a specific locality.



Finding a Missing Day

- But the earliest observation of an eclipse of the sun for which we know a date occurred in the year 1217 BC, after the time of Joshua (see "Eclipse," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1970).
- In any case, ancient eclipse observations are not given with an accuracy of even a few minutes.
- So confirmation of Joshua's long day by computer seems impossible at present.
- This strongly suggests that the computer story is a hoax.



Another Story

- In addition, the main features of this story are older than either NASA or computers!
- In his *Harmony of Science & Scripture*, published in 1936, Harry Rimmer recounts the following story (pp 281-282):



There is a book by Prof. C. A. Totten of Yale, written in 1890, which establishes the case beyond the shadow of a doubt. The condensed account of his book, briefly summarized, is as follows:

Another Story

Professor Totten wrote of a fellow-professor, an accomplished astronomer, who made the strange discovery that the earth was twenty-four hours out of schedule! That is to say, there had been twenty-four hours lost out of time. In discussing this point with his fellow-professor, Professor Totten challenged this man to investigate the question of the inspiration of the Bible. He said, 'You do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and I do. Now here is a fine opportunity to prove whether or not the Bible is inspired. You begin to read at the very beginning and read as far as need be, and see if the Bible cannot account for your missing time.'

Another Story

The astronomer accepted the challenge and began to read. Some time later, when the two men chanced to meet on the campus, Professor Totten asked his friend if he had proved the question to his satisfaction. His colleague replied, 'I believe I have definitely proved that the Bible is not the Word of God. In the tenth chapter of Joshua, I found the missing 24 hours accounted for. Then I went back and checked up on my figures, and found at the time of Joshua there were only 23 hours and 20 minutes lost. If the Bible made a mistake of 40 minutes, it is not the Book of God.' Professor Totten said, 'You are right, in part at least. But does the Bible say that a whole day was lost at the time of Joshua?'

Another Story

So they looked and saw that the text said, 'about the space of a whole day.' The word 'about' changed the whole situation, and the astronomer took up his reading again. He read on until he came to the 38th chapter of the prophet Isaiah. In this chapter, Isaiah has left us the thrilling story of the king, Hezekiah, who was sick unto death. In response to his prayer, God promised to add fifteen more years to his life. To confirm the truth of His promise, God offered a sign. He said, 'Go out in the court and look at the sundial of Ahaz. I will make the shadow on the sundial back up ten degrees!' Isaiah recounts that the king looked, and while he looked, the shadow turned backward ten degrees, by which ten degrees it had already gone down!

Another Story

This settles the case, for ten degrees on the sundial is forty minutes on the face of the clock! So the accuracy of the book was established to the satisfaction of this exacting critic.

The Stories Compared

- Notice both include the same three numbers:
 - A whole day missing overall
 - 23 hours, 20 minutes missing at Joshua's time
 - 40 minutes missing at Hezekiah's time
- Here, too, we have a dramatic (but rather different) story of how a skeptic is brought to see the truth of Scripture.
- In addition, there is a reference made to a book by a C. A. Totten, which dates back to 1890.

Professor Totten

- Charles Adiel Lewis Totten is listed in *Who Was Who in America* (1:1247).
- Totten was a graduate of West Point and a professor of military science at Yale from 1889 to 1892, when he resigned to spend more time on his religious studies.



Professor Totten

- He was a British-Israelist, believing that the Anglo-Saxons were the lost tribes of Israel.
- He was an Adventist, who predicted the reign of Antichrist would occur 1892-99.



Professor Totten

- Among Totten's many writings is *Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz*, published in 1890.
- This book has been recently reprinted by Destiny Publishers of Merrimac, MA.
- Reading Totten's book was shocking:
 - The dramatic story of a skeptic convinced does not appear!
 - Instead, Totten himself, a non-skeptic all along, seeks to show that a total of 24 hours are missing from past time, of which 23 hours 20 minutes were lost in Joshua's day and 40 minutes in Hezekiah's.

Totten's Calculations

- Totten does not actually reproduce his calculations, but merely gives the results.
- On pages 39, 59, and 61 of the edition I consulted (3rd revised, 1891), the fact emerges that Totten is using an assumed date of creation (22 Sept 4000 BC) for the fixed-point before the long day of Joshua.
- Totten takes the first day of creation to be a Sunday (by his understanding of Scripture).

Totten's Calculations

- But calculating back from the present, Totten finds that 22 Sept 4000 BC was a Monday!
- He concludes: "... it can come so by no possible mathematics without the interpolation or 'intercalation' of exactly 24 hours" (p 59).
- Totten's presentation tends to obscure his method of discovery.

Totten's Calculations

- It looks like Totten really started with these 24 hours missing, then decided from the 10 degrees mentioned in the Hezekiah incident to assign 40 minutes to that event, leaving 23 hours 20 minutes to Joshua.
- Totten has mentioned no fixed point between the times of Joshua and Hezekiah.

Totten's Calculations

- Totten, therefore, has no way of showing, independently of the biblical material, that such a division of the 24 hours should be made.
- His work, then, does not give any independent support to the Scripture accounts.

Totten's Source

- Totten does tell us where he got his date of creation.
- It was calculated by the British Chronological Association, headed up by Premier Chronologist Jabez Bunting Dimbleby.
- This group used to publish an almanac entitled *All Past Time*, by which they claimed to be able to account for every day since creation.

All Past Time

- Examining their almanac for 1885, it appears that they got their chronology by adding up the numbers given in the received text of the Old Testament, using a liberal supply of speculation regarding ancient methods of keeping the lunar and solar calendars aligned.
- A few minutes reading of this work convinced me that their method of interpreting Scripture is often arbitrary.

All Past Time

- In the light of archaeology, few conservative Christians would now accept 4000 BC as the date of creation, even among those who believe the earth is much younger than geologists are willing to concede.
- But Totten's whole scheme depends entirely on knowing the exact day of creation.



Conclusions

- Totten's work has no foundation independent of the Bible, and it is doubtful whether he properly understood Scripture in regard to his fixed-point, the date of creation.
- Sometime between Totten's work in 1890 and Rimmer's in 1936, the results were put in the form of a dramatic story in which Totten becomes a bystander and a skeptical astronomer the calculator.

Conclusions

- Since 1936, the story has apparently been updated by the addition of 'space age' features, including NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center scientists to replace the lone astronomer, and computers to speed up the tedious calculations.
- Does this story have any lessons for us as Christians?

Lessons

- We would all like to see skeptics turn to Jesus, and it is sometimes a temptation for us to 'bend' the truth a little to make a stronger argument.
- The end (eternal life) justifies the means (a little lie) doesn't it?
 - No, it doesn't!
 - This is trying to do God's work using Satan's tactics!

Lessons

- In the long run (when God allows the truth to come to light), such lies only give unbelievers modern examples by which to claim that the Bible writers were guilty of the same things!
- Instead, Christians should have such zeal for the truth that unbelievers will come to see that we really have it.

Lessons

- We should rebuke the Rimmers, the Hills, and others who have passed on these stories.
- They (and we) should be careful to check stories, particularly those that are favorable to our position.
- Certainly we should not be inventing stories to make Christianity look good!

Lessons

- There are excellent evidences for the truth of Christianity, which we have tried to present at our website www.ibri.org.
- We believe that those who reject Christianity will have no good answer at the day of judgment.
- In the meantime, let us be active helping people to see this while they can still turn to Christ.

