SPECTACULAR PHOTO OF ISRAEL FROM SPACE

U.S. Astronaut Randy Bresnik, current commander of the International Space Station, took a spectacular photo of Israel on November 11. Looking from the northeast, it shows the nation of Jordan (which was created by Winston Churchill in 1921), then all of Israel from the south slope of Mt. Hermon in the north to Eilat on the Red Sea (the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba is visible on the extreme left of the photo). Beyond Israel is nearly all of the Sinai Peninsula, with the Nile delta, the Suez Canal, and the Gulf of Suez in the distance. Haifa on the west slope of Mt. Hermon west of the Sea of Galilee is clearly seen. Also visible are Tel Aviv and Joppa on the coast and Jerusalem a bit west of the north end of the Dead Sea. The view will be very different in Christ’s kingdom, as the desert will blossom as the rose, and the glory of Jerusalem and the Millennial Temple will be visible. NASA uses Nikon cameras.

SPOUTING THE BILL NYE LINE

A homeschooling group in Canada has been criticized for inviting creationist Ken Ham to speak at an upcoming program. After the Alberta Home Education Association (AHEA) announced its invitation of Mr. Ham as one of three keynote speakers for its April 2018 convention, an anti-creationism activist has loudly denounced the group as “anti-science” (“Top U.S. creationist’s invitation,” www.cbc.ca, Nov. 8, 2017). The activist, who says that he rejected creationism after studying “the facts,” calls Mr. Ham a “science denier” because he denies evolution. The activist wants to spare children from “being kind of behind in life” by following “backwards teachings,” which is the view popularized by Bill Nye. We find it interesting that evolution would be equated with science, and we would ask to be shown the scientifically proven facts for the following evolutionary claims: That everything came from nothing; that the nothing that existed before everything wasn’t actually nothing; that a well-ordered universe arose from disorder; that life sprang from non-life; that mind-bogglingly complex things such as the living cell and the human brain came about by the processes of natural selection and genetic mutation. We would like for someone to explain the scientifically proven basis for believing that design points to a designer in the realm of human life, but not in the realm of biology. And we would like to be shown why it is considered scientific to shut down inquiry and allow only one position to be heard.
NORTH KOREA’S INTERNET

The following is excerpted from “North Korea’s internet is as weird as you think it is,” Associated Press, Nov. 10, 2017: “The free flow of information is anathema to authoritarian regimes, and with the possible exception of the African dictatorship of Eritrea, North Korea is still the least Internet-friendly country on Earth. Access to the global Internet for most is unimaginable. Hardly anyone has a personal computer or an email address that isn’t shared, and the price for trying to get around the government’s rules can be severe. But for Kim Jong Un, the country’s first leader to come of age with the Internet, the idea of a more wired North Korea is also attractive. It comes with the potential for great benefits to the nation from information technology—and for new forms of social and political control ...

Pyongyang’s solution is a two-tiered system where the trusted elite can surf the Internet with relative freedom while the masses are kept inside the national intranet, painstakingly sealed off from the outside world, meticulously surveilled and built in no small part on pilfered software. ... There are very few actual sites on Kwangmyong [the name of N. Korea’s intranet, meaning ’light’]. An official at the Sci-Tech Center said they number 168. They are spread across separate networks for government agencies, schools and libraries, and companies. ... Versions of Red Star [N. Korea’s computer operating system] that have made it out of North Korea and into the hands of foreign coding experts also reveal some rather sinister, and for most users invisible, features. ... Red Star uses a trace viewer that takes regular screenshots of what is being displayed. The screenshots can’t be deleted or accessed by the typical user but are available for checking if a trained government official decides to take a look. ... The most common online experience for North Koreans isn’t on a laptop or desktop. It’s on a smart phone. A decade ago, only a small cadre of select regime and military officials had access to smart phones. ... now there are an estimated 2.5-3 million mobile phones in North Korea, a country of 25 million. ... Like the walled-off intranet, North Korea’s phones deny access to the outside world. ... Wi-fi use is banned for North Koreans, and tightly restricted and monitored to block surreptitious piggybacking on foreigners’ signals.”

BLIND LUCK SMARTER THAN TOP PROGRAMMERS

New research has discovered that fruit flies have an “incredibly smart method to categorize smells which lets them recognize differences with a very fine level of accuracy” (“Patterns in Fruit Fly Brains Could Soon Power Your Netflix Recommendations,” Science Alert, Nov. 11, 2017). The research was done by a team from the University of California San Diego (UCSD) and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. Fruit flies are able to identify and categorize odors and associated behaviors (e.g., good to eat, must avoid) with great precision. Its brain has 2,000 neurons that “give each smell a distinct ID,” but only the top 5 percent of those are stored so that the fly can quickly sort through a great number of odors and associations. It turns out that this method is more effective than that which is currently used by services like Netflix and Spotify and YouTube to power their retrieval systems (e.g., labeling and sorting movies). “In a series of tests on three standard datasets commonly used by computer scientists, the fly method significantly outperformed basic locality-sensitive hashing,” Saket Navlakha of Salk says, “Pieces of this approach had been used in the past by computer scientists, but evolution put it together in a very unique way” (Ibid., Science Alert). Evolution put it together? Evolution put together a brilliant algorithm in the the brain of a fruit fly? This “evolution” thing must be very God-like. Natural selection and mutations couldn’t possibly explain such a thing.
PRAYER AT THE RIVER JABBOK

A couple of years ago I stood at the Jabbok River in Jordan not far from Israel’s border and considered Jacob’s experience there 3,700 years ago. It was at the river Jabbok that Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night (Ge. 32:22-30). Compare Hosea 12:4--“He had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him.” Jacob knew that “the man” in this scene was the Lord (Ge. 32:30). He knew that he was wrestling with God. The Bible says that Jacob saw God face to face. Jacob was supplicating with God (Ho. 12:4). It was the wrestling of prayer. It is a lesson of getting hold of God for blessing and help. Jacob refused to let the Lord go unless He blessed Him (Ge. 32:26). Unlike his brother Esau, Jacob valued spiritual things. He wanted God’s help and blessing. Though a schemer by nature, Jacob looked to God in his trouble. This is also the example of persistence in prayer. Jacob refused to let go. Compare Luke 18:1.

It is a picture of asking and continuing to ask, seeking and continuing to seek, knocking and continuing to knock (Mt. 7:7). This is the lesson of fervency in prayer. Jacob wept (Ho. 12:4). He was not just talking with God; he was wrestling with God; he was holding on to God. Compare Jas. 5:16. This is also a lesson about God’s amazing character. God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him all night. Can man really wrestle with the omnipotent God? Only if God allows it, but God has humbled Himself to relate with man as Man. This is the mystery of the incarnation. A man can wrestle with God in prayer and can “prevail” if he does so in faith and in accordance with God’s will. It was at Jabbok that God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, meaning “having power with God” (Ge. 32:27-28). By nature, Jacob was a schemer, sinful and weak and self-centered, but he was a man of faith and prayer and that is what made him Israel.
PRACTICAL BOOK ON NEW EVANGELICALISM WITH REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TRAINING

Church members are confronted with New Evangelical philosophy on every hand, including through nationally-syndicated radio personalities, the local bookstore, and Internet blogs. To be ignorant of the insidious and pervasive nature of New Evangelicalism is to be unprepared to identify and resist it, yet, large numbers of Bible-believing Christians know little or nothing about it. Hosea 4:6 warns, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge…” Large numbers of formerly “fundamentalist” churches have capitulated to a New Evangelical philosophy in the past 15 years. The book New Evangelicalism: Its History, Characteristics, and Fruit documents THE HISTORY AND SPREAD of New Evangelicalism since the 1950s and describes THE PRINCIPLES OF NEW EVANGELICALISM in a practical manner so that church members can understand what it is. These principles include the following:

New Evangelicalism is characterized by a repudiation of separation, by a love for positivism, by a repudiation of the more negative aspects of biblical Christianity, by a judge-not philosophy, by a dislike of doctrinal controversy, by exalting love and unity above doctrine, by a desire for intellectual respectability, by pride of scholarship, by an attitude of anti-fundamentalism, by the division of biblical truth into categories of essential and non-essential, and by a general mood of softness and tolerance, of a desire for a less strict Christianity, and of a weariness with theological fighting. The book also describes THE APOSTATE FRUIT OF NEW EVANGELICALISM, which is admitted even by some of its own leaders. Its apostasy is seen in the questioning of biblical infallibility, in its ecumenicalism, in a dramatic downgrade in Christian morality and embracing of the world, and in its tolerance of heretics. The third edition, August 2017, includes an extensive set of review questions as a teaching tool. I have used this book and the review questions to help prepare people for church membership when they are coming from a weak background. 219 pages. It is available as a free eBook at www.wayoflife.org.

INFORMATION

The Friday Church News Notes is designed for use in churches and is published by Way of Life Literature’s Fundamental Baptist Information Service. Unless otherwise stated, the Notes are written by David Cloud. Of necessity we quote from a wide variety of sources, but this obviously does not imply an endorsement. We trust that our readers will not be discouraged. It is God’s will that we know the times (1 Ch. 12:32; Mat. 16:3) and that now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:11-14). This material is sent only to those who personally subscribe to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service mailing list. To SUBSCRIBE, go to http://www.wayoflife.org/wayoflife/subscribe.html. TO UNSUBSCRIBE OR CHANGE ADDRESSES, go to the very bottom of any email received from us and click "Manage My Subscription." Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org.