



SHOUT

Volume 8 Issue 4

Winter, 2011

You who bring good tidings...go up on a high mountain... lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns ..."Here is your God!" Isaiah 40:9

**DON JOHNSON
EVANGELISTIC
MINISTRIES**

MEMBER
NEXT GENERATION ALLIANCE
A MINISTRY OF THE LUIS PALAU ASSOCIATION

Reach India UPDATE

I will be returning to minister in India in February.

I continue to be encouraged by the work God is doing in India, particularly with my partner ministry there, the Indian Council of Missions. Through evangelistic festivals and personal outreach, pastors' conferences, a Bible College, and an orphanage, the kingdom of God is advancing in Southern India. I will be returning in February to host a pastors' conference and teach a class at the ICM Bible College. Pastor Thomas and his family will then be visiting me in California in late March. If you would like to get together with us to learn more about our ministry in India, let me know.

Inside this issue:

- Christmas Gift Ideas 2
- The Gospels as History 3
- 2012 Exodus Holy Land Tour 4
- Organizational Details 4

Itinerary

Feb. 19: Preaching, ICM Church, Melur

Feb. 20: Pastors' Conference, Madurai

Feb. 21 and 22: Teaching in ICM Bible College, Melur

Feb. 23: Visiting ICM Orphanage and Feeding Project, Melur



I look forward to visiting the Maher family in India in February and in California in March.

The Mission

The purpose of Don Johnson Evangelistic Ministries is to boldly and creatively proclaim the Kingdom of God through various means of mass communication, including preaching, radio broadcasting, open forums and web and print publishing.

Are the Gospels Real History?

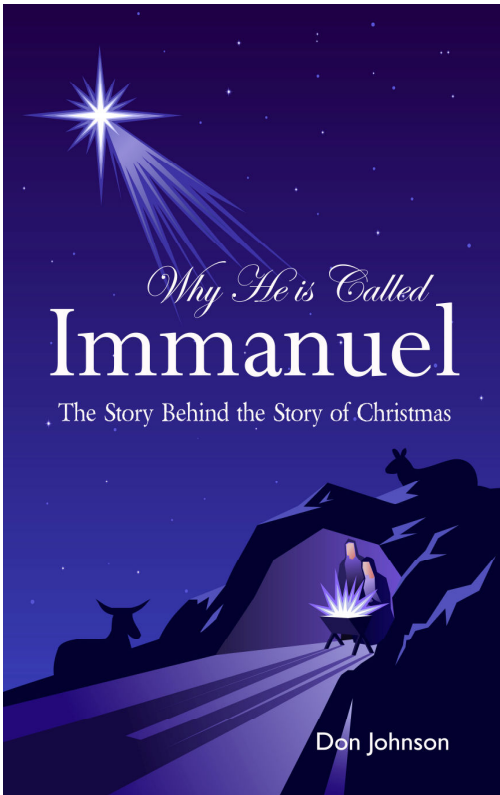
Did the gospel writers intend for us to see Jesus as a mythical figure rather than historical?

As Christians spend this season celebrating the arrival of God on earth two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, many skeptics of the faith are (often successfully) trying to convince people that we have it all wrong. They argue that there never was a Jesus, and that the gospel writers never intended the stories to be taken as actual history. The idea is that the authors were simply writing inspirational myth and would be shocked to discover that millions of people in the past two millennia have believed that a real Middle Eastern man performed miracles and rose from the dead. According to this view, the gospel writers never intended to start the Church as we know it. In evaluating this notion, let's start by examining how we generally approach historical literature.

When it comes to historical accounts, it seems to me there are at least four options in

(Continued on page 2)

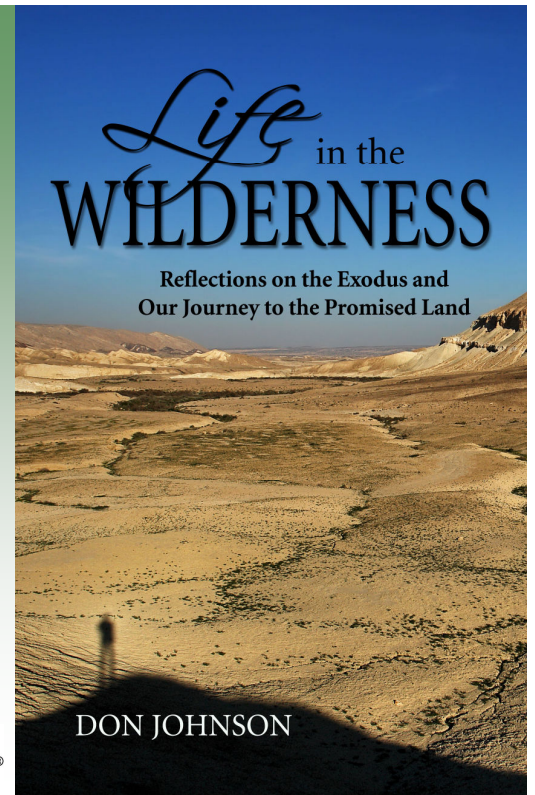
donjohnsonministries.org
lifeinthewilderness.com
thedonjohnsonshow.com
takethenarrowroad.com




**Looking for gifts
and stocking
stuffers?**

Don's books are
available in paperback
and Kindle format at

amazon.com[®]



Why the Gospels are Trustworthy

One key to debunking the "Jesus as Myth" notion is the remember that Jesus was Jewish. (Continued from page 1)

regards to authorial intent. We can distinguish each alternative by comparing what the author thinks is actually true about each one.

1. Entertainment

In this genre the author writes in order to provide enjoyment, excitement, etc. to the reader. There is nothing true or factual about such stories. They are made up for no greater purpose than to give somebody a way to kill some time. Most contemporary movies and mass market paperbacks would fall into this category.

2. Fable or Parable

In a fable or parable the people and events are made up (all the history in these tales is fiction), but the principle or morals (ethical lessons) are supposed to be true. Some of your more preachy, brow-beating movies and T.V. shows and Aesop's fables are examples of this category.

3. Non-literal history

This genre is not used often today but was common in ancient times. Some specifics of the historical narrative may be wrong or incomplete but the main points of the story are intended to be taken as factual. In other words, the

major historical event is accurate, but may not be explained in as detailed a way or with the exacting standards that we would like. A historical mini-series on T.V. might fit into this category. These authors are not claiming to operate as journalists or historians do today, but they are claiming to write factual history. The speeches of Thucydides in his account of the Peloponnesian War are an example.

4. Literal history

Everything about this account is intended to be true. This is how most modern histories are intended.

So how do you know into which category any particular writing fits? Well, you can start with basic questions like: What does the author say it is? For example, some "historical" movies put a disclaimer at the beginning explaining that this story is not factual and any similarities between the events or characters in the movie and actual people or events, living or dead, are purely coincidental. That is a pretty good hint that the author is not intending for you to take the story literally. On the other hand, some stories start with a direct claim that it is fact. Expressly claimed authorial purpose is a good place to start in deter-

(Continued on page 3)

Not Unhistorical Myth

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob does not offer abstract principles, he breaks into time and space. (Continued from page 2)

mining intention.

Of course that isn't the place to stop your examination. Other questions to ask include: Are there any appeals to specific dates, places, or people? What about appeals to outside sources for verification? These are stronger evidences that the story was intended to be understood as factual. Is the story clearly written as fantasy? Does it occur in an unspecified time and place? ("Once upon a time..." "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...") These are indications that the author was not intending the story to be actual history.

With just these criteria we can surmise that, for example, *Star Wars* seems to be intended as something in between Entertainment and Parable but was not meant to be understood as a literal or even non-literal historical account. On the other hand, the author of *A History of the American People* may have been writing literal or non-literal history, but clearly is not intending his work to be seen as a fable or entertainment.

I contend that the Gospels and Acts were meant by their authors to be either literal or non-literal history, not fable or parable (although there certainly are a few parables and fables within the teachings of Jesus). We can come to this conclusion using just the criteria mentioned above. Luke explicitly claims to be writing actual history at the beginning of Luke/Acts, for example, and specific names, dates, and places are common throughout. However, even if we did not have these passages (or they were later additions to the text), there is other evidence that supports the conclusion that the gospels were not intended to be taken as fable, namely the main message of all the gospels.

That main message is that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. The writers, regardless of their various audiences and theological emphasis, were unanimous in arguing that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jewish hope for a savior. That is to say, the gospel authors all saw Jesus as the ultimate end to which all of Jewish history had been leading. As such, the writers could not have been intending for their readers to take the accounts of Jesus as non-historical.

The key here is Jesus' Jewishness. It would make no sense for the gospel writers to intend a non-historical Messiah because that would be meaningless within the context of Jewish theology.

The "Jesus as Myth" folks argue that the Christ of the gospels does not have to be historical because he is just the personification of spiritual principles and sound worldly wisdom or some such thing. However, this idea is ridiculous if Jesus is indeed supposed to be the Jewish Messiah because the God of the Jews is not a God who speaks mystically and vaguely about principles for successful living. He is a God who breaks into history and acts in time and space.

Jews did not worship a set of ideals but a God who had called a specific person, Abraham, grew him into an actual genetic, physical entity: a family of humans, brought that family out of Egypt from literal slavery at a specific point in time with great physical signs and wonders, defeated other nations in battles that spilled real human blood, and

established a political kingdom on earth led by an actual, physical person named David. These events were not viewed

as parables or inspirational myths. They were understood as God's hand in history and it was on the historicity of these events that the Jews placed their hope for the future. They were expecting God to act again because he had done so in the past. They were looking forward to a time when God would again break into history and redeem them from their current state of slavery. If those past events didn't actually happen, the Jews had no god to worship and no hope for a Messiah. They put their faith in a person, not a set of ideals (read Psalms, for example.) As such, to present a non-historical savior to the Jews, which is what these "Jesus as Myth" scholars say happened, would be ridiculous. A savior who didn't act in time and space would be no savior at all.

Of course, it is clear that the New Testament writers did intend their readers to see Jesus as historical. For example, look at the sermons at the beginning of Acts: Peter and Stephen both concentrate their messages about Jesus on the fact that God had worked in the past and had now worked in history again. They clearly did not see Jesus as a non-historical myth. Indeed, that work is why we celebrate a birthday during this season, not an ideal or some inspirational principles. God didn't send us a Hallmark card, he came as a baby to a Jewish virgin named Mary. Of that fact we can be very confident and thankful. Merry Christmas!



Find more articles like this at Don's blog:

lifeinthewilderness.com

**DON JOHNSON
EVANGELISTIC
MINISTRIES**

**P.O. Box 7287
Huntington Beach, CA 92615
714-470-2048
don@donjohnsonministries.org**

WWW.DONJOHNSONMINISTRIES.ORG

Just Joining Us?

If this is your first newsletter and you would like to learn more about Don Johnson and DJEM, please contact us or visit our website. Donjohnsonministries.org contains background information about Don, articles about each of the major areas of ministry and the foundational philosophy of each one. You can also listen to sermons and radio show archives, click through to other neat sites and read past newsletter articles. See you in cyberspace!

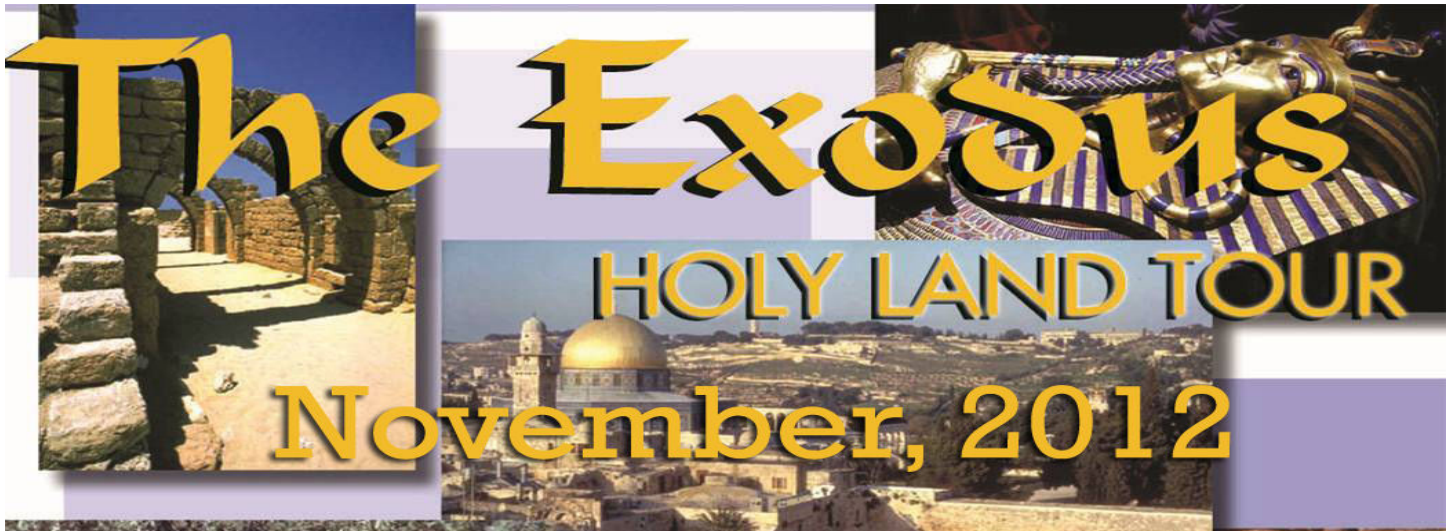
Organizational Details

Don Johnson Evangelistic Ministries is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit corporation registered with the state of California. As such, under the leadership of a board of directors, it operates according to strict legal guidelines in regards to funding and financial accountability. All donations are tax deductible. Donations can be made:

- Online at www.donjohnsonministries.org (you can use Visa, MasterCard or your bank account number via a PayPal account)
- By mailing a check or money order, payable to DJEM, to the address at left.

A note to Canadian supporters:

As an American non-profit corporation, donations to DJEM will not be tax deductible in Canada. If you would still like to support this ministry even without the tax break, I certainly appreciate it! Unfortunately, our bank no longer accepts Canadian checks, so if you would like to donate, please either do so online or mail funds in the form of a U.S. money order. Sorry for the inconvenience.



THEEXODUSTOUR.COM

