

Back to the Seed

Tree Grown From Ancient Seed Found in Jewish Fortress

Scientists have grown a tree from what may be the oldest seed ever germinated. The new sapling was sprouted from a 2000-year-old date palm excavated in Masada, the site of the fortress in Israel where Jews killed themselves to avoid capture by Roman invaders. Dubbed "the Methuselah Tree" after the oldest person in the Bible, the new plant has been growing steadily, and after 26 months the tree is nearly four feet tall. The species, called the Judean date, is now extinct in Israel, but researchers are hoping that by reviving the plant they may be able to study its medicinal uses. . . The seeds were found in storage rooms, and appear to have been stockpiled for the Jews hiding out from the Romans. They were under mounds of debris. The Jews committed suicide rather than give in to the Romans, who destroyed the site after that, which was more or less left for the next 2000 years. (via Fox News)

How interesting: A long extinct tree of great value and possibilities, grown again after discovery of seed under centuries of debris.

Thoughts of the ancient seed remind us of Jesus explaining His sower parable to those wanting to know about the four kinds of soil (wayside, rocky, thorny, good) receiving the seed. He began by saying first of all, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11).

How can we have the New Testament church today in the midst of a world of conflicting denominations? Some say only by a historical line traced through the centuries back to the apostles. But consider: all it takes is the right seed, God's word itself, and the good soil of receptive hearts who long to do His will.

How can we simply be Christians in the midst of a world where men's inventions have confused the way? It is the same: it takes the right seed, God's word itself, and the good soil of receptive hearts who long to do His will.

The palm seed "may hold the key to rediscovering ancient healing." But God's word holds the healing of the soul, reconciliation to Him, being "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because *'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever.'* Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

- by Robert Hines

True Reflections in God's Mirror

We go to great lengths to make sure we are always presentable before others. Many of us spend literal hours in front of a mirror, making sure each detail is in proper order. Do we care as much about our "real" presentation? Consider the passage in **Jas. 1:22-25** in light of this notion.

After admonishing us to be doers of the word and not hearers only (**v. 22**), James compares one who hears but doesn't do to a man who looks at his reflection in a mirror and then walks away, forgetting what kind of man he is (**vv. 23-24**).

The lesson is obvious. Such is a man who hears the word of God but doesn't think it applies to him (that is the reason why he doesn't do what he hears). So, upon walking away from God's "mirror" he thinks himself to be all right, forgetting what he saw as his need for improvement. We've all seen this person around or, God forbid, maybe even have become this man. Always thinking of someone else who better be listening when the word is preached, or thinking "someone ought to do that" when a suggestion is made. If this describes us, then we have truly deceived ourselves (**v. 22**).

James then contrasts such a pitiful man to the one who does what he hears. He concludes that such a one "will be blessed in what he does" (**v. 25**). However, notice how this man is described. The one who does what he hears is the one who "looks into the perfect law of liberty" or the gospel of Christ. Upon seeing his real reflection, he makes the necessary changes (this is the doing of what he hears). He has not forgotten what kind of man he is. He knows who he is...a sinner in need of salvation (**Rom. 3:23**). This look is not just a quick glimpse, never to look again.

Such a one who looks in this way "continues in it" (v. 25). There is no vanity here. Just the recognized need to continually pattern his life after what he sees. In short, he obeys what he hears.

So, have you checked your mirror? Do you remember what you saw? What reflection was there? God help us all to not be content with what we see in ourselves that is not good and make the necessary changes to please Him.

- by **Jeff Smith**

What's The Real Reason?

"There is no God". The person who is usually heard making that statement almost always follows it up with one or more reasons why they think that way. They may claim that true science denies the existence of God. They may cite some seemingly strong evidence in favor of the theory of evolution. They might even make an attack on the accuracy and reliability of the Bible.

Whatever the reasons may be, the one who disbelieves in God usually claims that his thinking is based on "science" or "logic". But what is the real reason for the unbelief of the unbeliever? Is it "scientific fact and logical reasoning" or something else?

Psalms 14:1 - "The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God'. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good." As we see in this verse, there is a certain lifestyle that accompanies disbelief in God. That lifestyle is totally at odds with the will of the Creator. If you really believe in a God, it makes it hard to ignore His will. However, if you have convinced yourself that there is no God then it makes it easy to live as you please.

So, why do so many people disbelieve in God? Because they don't want to be accountable to any one but themselves, especially a Creator. They want to live their own way, they want to live in sin. Is your sinful lifestyle blinding you to the truth? Don't be foolish, open your eyes and your heart to God.

- by **Phillip Mullins**

What About Miracles Today?

There are lots of people who believe that God empowers men to work miracles today. But, what does the Bible say?

YES, it is an absolute fact that God through His Holy Spirit gave men in the first century the power to perform miracles. (A miracle is, by definition, a supernatural act that defies explanation by the laws of nature.) The question is: Does God still give men such power today? NO, there are no miracles (remember our definition) occurring today. Here are the reasons why:

1) Miracles served a specific purpose in the first century. They were the means by which God revealed and confirmed His will to mankind (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3,4). Since God has finished His revelation (2 Peter 1:3) there is no longer any need for men to perform miracles. They have ended.

2) There were two ways to receive miraculous power in the first century. One way was by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5; 2:1-4). That baptism was only for a few - not for all - and it no longer is available (Ephesians 4:4-6). The only other way that men received miraculous abilities was by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-17). Obviously there are no apostles still living today, and therefore there is no way to receive these powers. Miracles have ended because the means by which they were imparted are no longer available to us.

3) The New Testament actually tells us that miracles were to end and tells when they would end. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-13, Paul states that miracles would end when God's complete revelation was made known to men. We now have His final word and, according to His own testimony, miracles have ended.

- by **Greg Gwin**